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**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON**

**FACULTY OF PHYSICAL SCIENCES AND ENGINEERING**

Electronics and Computer Science

Web and Internet Sciences

**Exploring The Value of Social Media Services for Charitable  
Organisations: A Mixed Methods Approach**

by

**Christopher J. Phethean**

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF PHYSICAL SCIENCES AND ENGINEERING

Electronics and Computer Science

Web and Internet Sciences

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EXPLORING THE VALUE OF SOCIAL MEDIA SERVICES FOR CHARITABLE  
ORGANISATIONS: A MIXED METHODS APPROACH

by Christopher J. Phethean

This thesis explores various factors that may influence the production of value for charities on social media websites. A mixed methods triangulation-based approach is used in order to improve understanding around why charities use social media and what they want to achieve by doing so, why supporters interact with charities on social media, and how this behaviour actually occurs on two popular social media sites: Facebook and Twitter. Qualitative sources of data are utilised in order to establish the reasons behind *why* social media are used, while quantitative sources provide evidence of interaction on these sites to establish whether or not the motivations of the charities are portrayed through their actual behaviour. An argument is made that because there are so many influencing factors on the resulting value, it is extremely difficult to measure this—and to distinguish success on these sites—through the use of automated tools that do not take into account the context of the organisation involved and what they are actually trying to achieve in the first place. Furthermore, this thesis suggests that analysing what the charity does in relation to their strategy can help to indicate whether or not a social media strategy has the potential to create the desired levels of value, and a classification system of communication styles is presented in order to assist with this process. This thesis therefore provides contributions that help to understand the value of social media for charities, and as such has implications for future social media research, charitable strategy planning and Web Science as a wider discipline.



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## Declaration of Authorship

I, **Christopher J. Phethean** , declare that the thesis entitled *Exploring The Value of Social Media Services for Charitable Organisations: A Mixed Methods Approach* and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- parts of this work have been published as: [Phethean et al. \(2012a\)](#), [Phethean et al. \(2012b\)](#), [Phethean et al. \(2013a\)](#), [Phethean et al. \(2013b\)](#) and [Phethean et al. \(2014\)](#)

Signed:.....

Date:.....



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# Abbreviations

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| <i>AEA</i> | <b>A</b> wareness- <b>E</b> ngagement- <b>A</b> ction     |
| <i>API</i> | <b>A</b> pplication <b>P</b> rogramming <b>I</b> nterface |
| <i>BSC</i> | <b>B</b> alanced <b>S</b> corecard                        |
| <i>CDB</i> | <b>C</b> onspicuous <b>D</b> onation <b>B</b> ehaviour    |
| <i>CRM</i> | <b>C</b> ustomer <b>R</b> elationship <b>M</b> anagement  |
| <i>FQL</i> | <b>F</b> acebook <b>Q</b> uery <b>L</b> anguage           |
| <i>WFP</i> | <b>W</b> orld <b>F</b> ood <b>P</b> rogramme              |
| <i>WOM</i> | <b>W</b> ord <b>O</b> f <b>M</b> outh                     |



# Chapter 1

## Introduction: Charities, the World Wide Web and Social Media

“Like us on Facebook, and we will vaccinate zero children against polio.”

— Unicef Sweden

Since the turn of the millenium, online social media technologies have grown to be an integral part of many people’s lives and are now used by about half of all UK adults ([Office for National Statistics, 2013](#); [Ofcom, 2014](#)). This astronomic rise has coincided with a general trend towards digital technologies, fuelled by the growth and maturity of the World Wide Web. Increasing amounts of daily activities can now be carried out online, commentary and opinions can be published by almost anyone and information—as well as misinformation—can spread faster than ever. This development has brought with it new, innovative ways by which organisations can communicate to their supporters, followers or customers. Social media represent a new type of digital channel through which marketing activities can be carried out, offering new possibilities that are not yet fully understood. The recent financial climate has made this all the more important: low-cost marketing activities that can resonate on a personal level with prospective customers are a potential gold-mine for organisations that utilise them. For some organisations, such as charities, having this tool in their arsenal of marketing and communication methods can be vital to overcome a harsh climate where the resources available to the public—and subsequently the charities themselves—are stretched, creating fierce competition for donations.

This thesis approaches this phenomenon by raising questions about how to determine the value of social media services for charitable organisations. Using an interdisciplinary approach as advocated by Web Science, an investigation into how these new technological offerings interact with a society increasingly acceptive and dependent on them can be carried out, to provide an analysis that offers more than either an analysis of the

technology alone, or a sole focus on the user, could deliver. By escaping the metaphorical gravitational pull of any single discipline, Web Science encourages the combination and integration of methods, theories and approaches from a number of disciplines that can be related to the Web. As such, this thesis presents an incorporation of the technical approaches of computer science with techniques from management and marketing research, while also supporting this work with relevant theoretical perspectives of the social sciences. In order to contextualise this however, this chapter first provides an introduction to the charitable landscape at the time of this research, the Web and social media technologies, and finally the interaction of the both of these.

## 1.1 The Charitable Landscape

The 2008 financial crisis left many organisations—and governments—around the world in turmoil. As numerous countries were pulled into the global recession, the amount of money donated to charities dropped, unsurprisingly. Many charities were faced with the prospect of having to cut operating costs in order to counterbalance the dramatic reduction in donations that they received from supporters ([Jamieson, 2008](#)). As reported by [The Charity Commission \(2008\)](#), the impacts were being felt in the UK soon after the economic downturn began, putting increasing amounts of strain on charities' resources. In 2011, the Bank of England's governor stated that he feared Britain was "in the grip of of the world's worst ever financial crisis", reflecting the ongoing nature of this deep problem ([Elliott and Allen, 2011](#)).

By 2013, charities as large as Oxfam were reporting falls in income that were stretching their resources, while the amount spent on responding to crises was increasing ([Best, 2013](#)). This reflects the problem that many charities were facing, with many others facing closure because of cuts in funding ([Ramesh, 2011](#)). In particular, smaller charities were seen as being under increasing levels of threat as donations were more likely to go to the larger charities ([Smithers, 2012](#)). This may be down to smaller charities not having the resources to effectively spread word of their work, in order to make people aware of their need and then go on to donate. With such a bleak financial landscape it is unsurprising that many organisations ran into trouble.

## 1.2 The Web and Social Media

The second contextual factor for this thesis is the rise of social media thanks to the widespread adoption and use of the World Wide Web. [Hall and Tiropanis \(2012\)](#) discuss the evolution of the Web in the relatively short time since Tim Berners-Lee conceived the idea. Beginning with the "Web of documents", it initially allowed for resources to be shared and retrieved over a network, before developing more into a "Web of people"

when network effects took over and the crowd was leveraged in order develop sites such as Wikipedia to store the knowledge of the entire planet (Hall and Tiropanis, 2012). As the people played an even greater role in the shaping of the Web in subsequent years, Hall and Tiropanis (2012) describe the next stage in the Web's evolution as the "Web of data and social networks", reflecting the vast amounts of data now available on users' personal and professional lives. The effect of the development of social networks is described by Hall and Tiropanis (2012) as follows:

"[Online social networks] transformed the Web to an artefact that goes beyond a read-only or a read-write medium; it established the Web as an integral part of one's life that pervaded society and many sectors of human activity including business and citizenry."

This development to "Web 2.0" represented a Web where websites could offer improved services when more people used them and content is created—not just consumed—by all users (O'Reilly, 2007). Services were beginning to be designed that encouraged and afforded the contributions of everyone—social network sites that allow anyone to create a profile, blogs to publish the views of any citizen, regardless of whether they're a journalist or not, and video sharing sites that could promote all levels of creative talent across a massive, global audience. Today, social media's growth is undeniable; Twitter has 271 million active monthly users as of the second quarter of 2014<sup>1</sup> while in March 2014 Facebook had an average of over 800 million daily users<sup>2</sup>. These statistics show the incredible size of two of the largest social media sites at the time of writing, and indicate that the potential audience of any successful campaign on these sites is massive. This makes social media sites extremely attractive avenues for marketing.

Uses of social media now go beyond what the creators of these sites intended: Facebook is no longer solely a site for University students to manage their friendships—it is a virtual directory of people, businesses and communities, all of which are drawn to its website through the network effects of knowing how many others are using it, and fearing the cost of not being involved themselves. Twitter has similarly evolved from a service for sending short messages to an all-out broadcast medium for spreading breaking news and crisis reporting. Like the underlying platform that these services run on—the World Wide Web—before it, social media have shown that the developers of these sites only 'create' them to a certain extent; it is society which has shaped and moulded these tools in to what is wanted, or even needed, at any time. This co-constitution reflects that described in '*A Manifesto for Web Science?*' which describes how society and technology shape each other in the context of the Web, and it is clear that this is also the case for social media (Halford et al., 2010).

<sup>1</sup><http://www.statista.com/statistics/282087/number-of-monthly-active-twitter-users/>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.marketwatch.com/story/facebook-reports-first-quarter-2014-results-2014-04-23>

With the large amounts of data created by users regularly and willingly posting information about their lives, it was inevitable that companies would seize the opportunities to utilise these sites for marketing. The structure of social media sites, whereby linking and sharing are actively and constantly encouraged, means that messages can spread quickly and easily, potentially reaching enormous numbers of people. This offers a compelling platform through which a marketing campaign could be disseminated for little financial cost, with a possible outcome of the campaign spreading virally through the network to reach thousands, and perhaps even millions, of users. With the harsh economic climate described above, this provided the possibility that low-cost marketing through social media could offer an outlet through which charities could still get word out regarding their work, encourage support, and obtain the donations necessary to survive.

### 1.3 Changing the Channel: Social Media for Charities

As well as commercial organisations, charities also saw the potential for social media to increase the exposure of their work and attract additional support. Miller (2009) refers to the requirement for organisations to stop interrupting people and instead become what the people are interested in—indicating the need to change from mass marketing approaches that were becoming less effective for fundraising. With the financial climate described above straining charities’ resources, social media sites were maturing to become the thriving communities that charities could turn to for low-cost, fast-paced and targeted marketing campaigns. However there is still a considerable amount of misdirection regarding social media based marketing—the popularity of particular user or organisational accounts are discussed without assessing whether or not this translates into ‘real’ charitable action. For example, the Swedish branch of Unicef ran a campaign with the tagline “likes don’t save lives”<sup>3</sup> in an attempt to make supporters aware that they weren’t helping the charity achieve their goals just by ‘liking’ their content on Facebook.

The implication here is that social media and charities may seem like an obvious match given the environmental factors in which charities were strained for resources and that social media appeared to be on the rise. While using social media could undoubtedly form an effective and sensible strategy, the reality is that it is much more complex to determine whether or not such an approach would actually be valuable to a charity or not. Social media marketing is not merely just the content that is shared via Web technologies; it is part of a system, a social machine, that is developing with society and must be understood both in terms of how it is used, and how effectively it performs at achieving the aims of countless charitable organisations.

Social media have empowered people with a public voice and given them the ability to create change, but it is often assumed that the effect this has is much greater than

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<sup>3</sup>Likes don’t save lives—UNICEF Sweden TV commercial: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2\\_MOSDk3ZaM&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_MOSDk3ZaM&feature=youtu.be)

it possibly is in reality. How much effect social media really have is a question that remains unanswered—even as they are attributed with causing political change during the Arab Spring (Gaffney, 2010), helping Obama win the US presidential election<sup>4</sup> and—conversely—spreading misinformation that lead to an innocent man accused of the Boston bombings<sup>5</sup>, a lack of clarity regarding their actual role remains. If charities are to fully adopt social media as a channel for attracting, engaging and mobilising supporters then more concrete assertions about the value of social media are required. Only then can charities fully commit to using social media as an integral part of their overall marketing strategy.

### 1.3.1 Scope of This Thesis

Social media can be used in various ways by organisations for marketing and engagement with supporters or customers. While it is possible for these organisations to use paid advertising on many of these sites, this thesis is concerned primarily with the use of the basic features of the sites themselves to provide social ‘stream’ marketing—that is posts that appear in a user’s social feed because they have chosen to connect with the organisation, or are connected to someone else who has shared the post to them. For example, on Facebook this would consist of a charity running a brand page, and posting messages that then appear on the news feed of any user who ‘likes’ the page. Similarly on Twitter, this would be a standard tweet that would appear in the timeline of any followers of the organisation. These messages leverage the networked properties of the social media sites, along with the potential for the viral spread of content and word-of-mouth marketing. Fundamentally, they require fewer financial resources than other communication channels and therefore offer a compelling case for use by small organisations and charities (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). However Quinton and Fennemore (2012) comment on how charities have not previously allocated resources to this channel effectively, demonstrating a misunderstanding of the requirements on their commitment to producing positive results.

## 1.4 Outline of This Thesis

This introduction has provided the context from which this research originated. In particular, this thesis focuses on an investigation into the value of social media for charities. Based on the situation described above, this is an essential area that must be understood in order to validate the expenditure of critical time and resources on social media. Ultimately, this thesis contributes insights into a number of areas that affect social media

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<sup>4</sup><http://www.dragonflyeffect.com/blog/dragonfly-in-action/case-studies/the-obama-campaign/>

<sup>5</sup><http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/boston-marathon-bombings-how-twitter-and-reddit-got-it-wrong-8581167.html>



value and each other, and therefore makes the argument that these should be analysed collectively rather than focusing on each issue individually. This involves understanding the intentions and behaviour of both the charity and their supporters, as well as looking at the evidence of interaction between each party on these sites. Using these findings, a model is presented in order to emphasise how the issues described above each feed into the overall assessment of social media value for any one charity. The remainder of this document details the work carried out to arrive at this model and is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 provides information sourced from background literature on how marketing has previously been measured and assessed, and how this is different for social media and charities. Chapter 3 then moves on to assessing the relevant literature on social media itself—how it is used, issues with determining its success, and what value has been attributed to it previously. These two chapters provide the theoretical and academic foundations to the remainder of this thesis.

Chapter 4 takes into consideration the background literature and proposes a methodology for the research to investigate social media's value in the charitable sector. A mixed methods, pragmatic approach using triangulation is adopted and a number of research strands are designed in order to provide insights into the problem.

The thesis then moves on to reporting the main outputs of this research. Chapter 5 presents a pilot study that suggests a framework of 'stages' that can be achieved by a social media campaign. This is referred to throughout the subsequent studies, and helps to categorise future findings and discussions.

The outputs of the main study are then discussed. Chapter 6 reports the findings from research into the motivations behind why charities use social media, which is an important consideration to process when trying to determine social media's value, and as such uses qualitative methods to explore the rationale behind this. Chapter 7 presents the results of a quantitative survey that was carried out to elicit the views and motivations of charitable supporters, regarding why they connect or interact with charities on social media. As the final results chapter, Chapter 8 focuses more on social network analysis to present a classification of communication styles on social media, followed by an analysis of conversation chains that occur on these sites which provides insights into how much textual interaction actually occurs.

Finally, these results are triangulated and discussed in Chapter 9. Here a discussion is then presented regarding their meaning and impact, before the final conclusions are made and a value framework for social media is proposed. Finally the limitations of this work and the potential for further study are discussed, before final remarks to summarise this thesis are presented.

## Chapter 2

# Background: Marketing Measurements

“Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is I don't know which half.”

— John Wanamaker

This chapter details an overview of the approaches to measuring marketing since the 1990s, by discussing the papers which propose or review changes in thought and reality with regards to assessing marketing performance. Covering this history is important to establish and ground the impact that social media has had on the area, so that its similarities and differences with other changes in thought can be noticed. The chapter moves on to discuss the considerations required for charitable marketing analysis, and shows that this type of marketing introduces different factors to consider. The novelty of social media is covered, in order to show how it differs from traditional marketing, and then the developments around measuring social media are discussed. Finally, an assessment of how charitable use of social media may differ from other organisations is presented.

### 2.1 Understanding the Evolution of Marketing Measurement

In a seminal paper by [Kaplan and Norton \(1992\)](#), a shift in the way that marketing should be measured was discussed, which subsequently began a change in thinking for marketing measurement. The paper's first line, “[w]hat you measure is what you get” began the argument that financial measures that were popular at the time were outdated and insufficient for the post-industrial era ([Kaplan and Norton, 1992](#)). The authors supported shifting to a customer-based approach, rather than continued reliance on financial

measures of success—although these were not abandoned completely in their proposal (Kaplan and Norton, 1992). A “balanced scorecard” (BSC) of performance measures was proposed, including four groups of measures: financial metrics, an internal—appreciating what to excel at—perspective, customer perspectives and innovation—looking at how to improve and create value.

Less than a decade later, Clark (1999) also described trends of moving away from singular, financial measures of performance, which suggests that the shift following the proposal of the BSC in 1992 was actually happening. This stemmed from growing demand from investors to understand the traditionally under-reported quality of the marketing campaign. Three movements were reported upon: shifting from a reliance on financial measures to the incorporation of non-financial aspects (such as customer satisfaction and loyalty); considering input measures such as the marketing activities used themselves, as well as output measures; and moving towards multidimensional metrics that analyse more about a larger selection of performance domains such as efficiency and effectiveness (Clark, 1999). However, it was suggested that in the aftermath of the BSC proposal—which emphasised a small number of performance measurement groups—there was a growing complexity from the sheer number of metrics and measures being offered to the extent that managers were feeling overwhelmed, and so the authors advocated that a small number of simple yet comprehensive measures were proposed (Clark, 1999). It was also claimed that financial measures “are snapshots of the present and say little about the marketing health of the company in the future”, which indicates that other, non-financial measures are essential to ‘measuring’ a campaign (Clark, 1999).

As the Web rose in prominence towards the end of the twentieth century, studies began to show how new opportunities for marketing were arising. Traditional models for assessing the diffusion of a campaign, particularly the Bass diffusion model (which predicts the number of adopting users), were compared to what could be analysed using online data. Montgomery (2001) discusses how the Bass model uses—and is restricted to—aggregate-level data, whereas the Web affords the collection of information on an individual-level, which can therefore be used to analyse and forecast behaviour. This pre-dated social media, but hinted at the tremendous possibilities of online, user-level data which—unknowingly to the author—was to increase rapidly over the next thirteen years. However, not long after this, Kim et al. (2003) cite work that suggested a continued dominance of financial measures, providing the rationale for them to produce a model based on the BSC for evaluating customer relationship management (CRM). CRM is described as a strategy of making an organisation “customer-centric while still expanding revenue and profit”, which the authors state was becoming increasingly noticed by industry around the turn of the millenium (Kim et al., 2003). The groups of measures initially proposed in the BSC were replaced with those containing metrics related to customer value, customer satisfaction, customer interaction and customer knowledge, demonstrating the increasing appreciation of the customer’s relationship with a brand,

and the value of this (Kim et al., 2003). However in Ambler et al. (2004)’s study of UK marketers it is claimed that accounting measures still dominated, despite the rising suggestions around using the BSC. This paper referenced Chakravarthy (1986) to highlight some of the problems with this—primarily that these measures can only look backwards at previous performance, and therefore lack any kind of prediction regarding potential future performance—echoing the views of Clark (1999) (Ambler et al., 2004).

Grönroos (1994) described a “paradigm shift” from the once dominant “marketing mix” model that focused on the four Ps of marketing (product, price, place and promotion) and the transactions and sales around these, to relationship marketing strategies. Such approaches, combined with customer satisfaction monitoring were claimed to be becoming the new focus in marketing, and focused directly on the activities undertaken with a customer (Grönroos, 1994). Describing the potential for monitoring customer satisfaction, Grönroos (1994) states:

“This system will provide management with a continuously updated database of its customers and continuous information about the degree of satisfaction and dissatisfaction among customers.”

This quote is fascinating to read when looking back to the time in which it was written, where the Web had barely taken off and online shopping and social media services that are used today were non-existent. At this time, obtaining the necessary data about a wide range of customers—along with being able to quickly interact with them—was more limited, and achieving personalised, relationship-building marketing strategies was therefore requiring significant investment (Greenyer, 2006). While Greenyer (2006) suggests that over the fifteen years preceding their paper, marketing had become more measurable, it could only be that until very recently, with the rapid influx of social media providing data and channels to interact on, that relationship marketing is a fully feasible and measurable phenomenon. One of the specifics that social media facilitates, which Greenyer (2006) stated as important at the time, is focusing on the main customer base, rather than a few prospects who are identified as the most profitable—the majority are required to maintain a critical mass within the community, and social media is likely to have significantly reduced the cost of reaching them.

This section has discussed an overview of the evolution of approaches to marketing measurement since the 1990s and has shown a theme in moving away from purely financial metrics for determining performance. Instead, more focus on the customer has frequently been suggested, and methods that take into account the future performance are required as many metrics currently only examine the present and previous performance. With more attention on relationship-building marketing strategies, and a wide customer-base, there is the need for large amounts of data to track these relationships. Social media offers an opportunity for this as it makes the data on large numbers of users available

for research. However, before moving on to looking at what differences social media can bring to this area, an assessment of whether many of these marketing aspects can be applied to charities is required.

## 2.2 Considerations For Charitable Marketing

The previous section highlighted some of the changes in thought regarding marketing measurement since the 1990s. In order for this to be applied to the context of this research however, the similarities and differences between traditional, corporate marketing and charitable marketing need to be considered. The case for “organizational marketing”—or whether traditional marketing principles could be transferred to non-business organisations—was first suggested in a seminal paper by [Kotler and Levy \(1969\)](#). With many marketing principles applicable to non-commercial organisations, it was proposed that in addition to the common meaning of marketing as attempting to sell a product, a second meaning of serving and satisfying human needs should be added—the challenge many firms face, as alluded to above, is developing a loyal customer base and this requires focusing on discovering their needs ([Kotler and Levy, 1969](#)). The switch in focus to the customer means that instead of preceding the aims of satisfying the customer, the process of selling a product now follows it ([Kotler and Levy, 1969](#)). Focusing on customer satisfaction as described here means that the concept of marketing could be extended from focusing solely on commercial businesses, to considering any organisation that has a relationship with customers, clients or supporters.

However, despite the similarities with regards to focusing on a relationship with customers, there are differences with charitable marketing that are described in the literature. Primarily, objectives for a charity are likely to be external to the organisation; often they will not focus on profit or other financial measures ([Sargeant, 1999](#), p. 18). This may be related to the fact that there is generally no physical product with a charity—instead the gain for the customer is more often a service or positive feeling that is much harder to market, despite it being a more flexible cost as it is left to the donor to choose how much to donate ([Sargeant, 1999](#), p. 18-19). Further differences arise as the cost that a supporter may choose to pay to help a charity is not necessarily a financial one—in many cases time and effort are equally important, while other costs include inconvenience and the psychic costs (such as overcoming the fear of donating blood) ([Rothschild, 1979](#)). These differences raise important issues to consider when attempting to ascertain the performance of charitable marketing, as both the inputs and outputs that could be measured will likely differ compared to corporate organisations. Another big contrast between the two domains is that while a commercial product requires positive framing in order to sell, a charitable message can provide a significant impact if it uses negative framing—such as stating what consequences will ensue if action is *not* carried out ([Das et al., 2008](#)). The emotive nature of this type of marketing makes it an entirely different proposition

compared to corporate marketing, and the strategies to achieve this will also encompass many different techniques. For charitable causes, marketing therefore appears to be a very different proposition, despite the similarities discussed above.

Taking this into account, it is now required to examine what differences social media brings to the marketing agenda, so that the overlap between the charitable needs and the affordances of social media can be understood. The next section looks into what types of marketing social media facilitates, taking into account the network properties underlying the services themselves, and the changes that they can bring about within their audience.

## 2.3 Why Social Media is Different: Viral Marketing and Word of Mouth

Section 2.1 described the evolution of marketing measurements up until the mid-2000s. It ended by mentioning the possibilities that social media provide in potentially fulfilling the suggestions described throughout regarding focusing on customer relationship marketing, and collecting large amounts of data to represent the entire audience. Section 2.2 argues that while there are some key differences in both the inputs and outputs to charitable marketing campaigns, many traditional marketing principles can be applied to the charitable domain. At this point, and before looking at how social media measurement has changed within its short period of existence, the differences of social media as a platform for marketing must be considered so that the types of marketing it facilitates are understood.

One of the most attractive aspects of social media from a marketing perspective is the possibility that content will ‘go viral’ and spread rapidly to a large number of users. With this, the exposure of the organisation can be increased for a brief period of time, which may be all that is needed to generate awareness about what they do. Viral marketing—through which the organisation builds awareness of the brand—can, if successful, in turn create powerful, positive word-of-mouth (WOM) spreading as a result where an audience spreads news of an organisation to other people that they know, with little input from the organisation themselves (Ferguson, 2008). This difference is subtle, but important when considering the factors of social media marketing: viral marketing revolves around the materials produced by the marketing brand itself, whereas WOM is the customer- or supporter-led sharing of information. While these are both by no means completely new, the current popularity and intensity of use around social media means that their prominence is amplified, along with their importance for marketing.

Additional forms of marketing are also made increasingly influential and visible on social media in comparison to traditional, offline marketing. Individual users are given the

opportunity to create, rather than just consume content which, when carried out for a brand, gives rise to “vigilante marketing”, whereby brand loyalists create their own marketing materials that provide free advertising and observable indicators of brand perception for the organisation to benefit from (Muñiz and Schau, 2007). With this surge in co-creation of content and value, Cova and White (2010) suggest that marketers should no longer be marketing *to* customers, but *with* them, in order to utilise the passion that they hold towards the brand. Cova and White (2010) describe that in turn, this creates “linking value”, referring to the development of interpersonal links between customers, which cannot be produced without the support of those customers.

While these ‘vigilante’ communities are often positive and productive spaces that are beneficial to the organisation, there are times at which this is not true. Two types of “competing” brand community are described by Cova and White (2010). Firstly “counter-brands” are competing brands developed by members of the original community who feel driven to act because they have been exploited in some way (Cova and White, 2010). “Alter-brands”, on the other hand, are created by a community that develops services and relationships independently from the company, and where the motives are generally more positive: “to serve the common collective goals of community members” (Cova and White, 2010). Both of these types of community can potentially harm the organisation’s own efforts at developing a successful online community, and therefore in order to produce the positive vigilante marketing as described by Muñiz and Schau (2007), work must be done to prevent negative, competing brands emerging and distracting attention away from the original community (Cova and White, 2010). Successfully managed, however, these communities could offer significant opportunities—rather than threats—for an organisation’s marketing strategy.

Mechanisms for quickly reposting content on social media mean that it offers further differences from traditional marketing relating to the way that content is shared and spreads. Indications of popularity can be gauged by tracking reposting mechanisms (such as the retweet on Twitter). For example, Lerman and Ghosh (2010) studied the spread of news stories on two social media sites: Digg (a densely interconnected social link sharing site) and Twitter (a more sparsely connected platform for sharing short messages). The study found that the spreading of information on these sites occurred in a remarkably similar manner and despite the different structures of the user communities, both encouraged WOM in a similar way (Lerman and Ghosh, 2010). However looking in more depth at the data made available through social media, the authors revealed that the underlying processes of spreading were different: Digg disseminated information faster due to the dense interconnections, whereas Twitter ultimately reached more users (Lerman and Ghosh, 2010). The implication of this is that the underlying network structure of a social media site can greatly alter the way in which information can spread and so an important distinction needs to be made between the sites themselves when carrying out analysis on social media as a whole.



Furthermore, as eluded to above, relationship marketing can be focused upon more by using social media, and these campaigns can help to develop trust within the brand's audience (Miller and Lammars, 2010). With more trust, an audience will be able to receive more emotional support (particularly for charities that deal directly with helping people), which can subsequently go on to develop even more trust in the community (Valenzuela et al., 2009). In a study of Facebook's connection to online users' social capital, Valenzuela et al. (2009) found that use of Facebook was positively associated with social trust, and that belonging to a Facebook group (a page dedicated to a particular interest) related to civic action was linked with offline civic engagement, indicating that the enhanced relationship developed by an online social network can impact upon a user's willingness to participate offline. As WOM is based around people telling others that they know about a particular product, service or organisation, it is apparent that the potential for higher trust is increased through social media's amplification of the opportunities to spread news.

Having now considered the similarities and differences of charitable marketing, and social media marketing, compared to traditional offline marketing, the next section will cover approaches to measuring social media.

## 2.4 Measurement of the Web and Social Media

Continuing with the development of marketing measurements described above, and with the similarities and differences between charitable and corporate marketing understood, it is important to examine how measures have been applied to social media technologies as they have grown in popularity over the last ten years. Early studies, such as Bennett (2007) that pre-date the relative ubiquitous nature of today's social media indicated that organisations were struggling to determine the value of the relationship with their online audience. Bennett (2007)'s study found that British charities were still focusing on the unsophisticated "accounting" metrics for analysing performance, showing that the claims discussed above in papers such as Ambler et al. (2004) about slow adoption of other measures still appeared to be holding true. Little attention was paid to tracking the public perception of an organisation, or examining the relationship between the organisation and their supporters, despite the Web being a far more mature and developed platform by this point (Bennett, 2007). However, even for commercial organisations, there was a lack of evidence to shed light on the effectiveness of WOM that is facilitated greatly by Web-enabled, social technologies (Trusov et al., 2009). Without reliable metrics to assess the effectiveness of this type of marketing, it is possible that this held back social media marketing at the time. Indeed Ferguson (2008) states that marketers at one point began to avoid viral marketing techniques that are so suited to social media because they only appeared to obtain short-term awareness, rather than any tangible, lasting return and that this is partly due to the unfulfilled quest for reliable metrics.



Fuelled by the immense rise in social media popularity over the last few years that has culminated in some reports estimating that nearly one in four people worldwide would be a social network user in 2013<sup>1</sup>, the amount of advice and suggestions for measuring social media has increased. Sterne offers a number of measures for social media such as the “reach” of a message—or the proportion of a population who have potentially noticed it, which can be seen as the “first step on the path to a long and profitable customer experience” (Sterne, 2010, p. 15-42). Additionally, the “average shared links click-through rate” based on previous work by Avinash Kaushik is described as a way to quantify how many users have clicked on shortened links shared via social media, and so provides insights into how many supporters take the next step in their relationship with a brand to visit the suggested webpage (Sterne, 2010, p. 115-116). These examples indicate a movement towards new types of measurements based on the social media age, and reflect a trend away from the “accounting” measures that Bennett (2007) found were still relied upon. This movement mirrors some of the trends described above in the time before social media, and may even show similarities to (Clark, 1999)’s claim that the number of new measures in the aftermath of the BSC suggestion became overwhelming for those trying to use them.

### 2.4.1 Different Approaches for Charities on Social Media

In addition to the differences between charitable marketing and more traditional corporate marketing methods, there are also clear distinctions to be made when deciding on how to use social media. Seth Godin suggests that the traditional marketing analogy of a funnel should be completely flipped, so that instead of squeezing a small number of buyers from a large input audience, a charity can empower a small number of engaged supporters to use social media as a megaphone in order to reach a potentially massive audience (Godin, 2006). This reflects the cost-effectiveness of social media as a marketing channel, as it exposes publicly the support of enthusiastic followers so that awareness of a cause can propagate through a network. Das et al. (2008) refer to the need for charitable messages to attract each individual contribution, while explicitly stating how others are already contributing, and social media provides an ideal avenue for this kind of disclosure. Actions on charitable websites often encourage the acting user to post to a social media site—so even if they do not necessarily encounter the charitable cause on a social site, they are pushed in to exposing their action so that a larger audience can see it. Similarly, every time an individual reacts to a message by interacting with it, the action appears in their friends’ news feeds, publicising the effort and providing that user with the exposure of doing something “good”. However this could be seen as the easy way to obtaining the feeling of doing something important and worthwhile, and

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.emarketer.com/Article/Social-Networking-Reaches-Nearly-One-Four-Around-World/1009976>

introduces one of the major challenges regarding how to determine how effective social media sites actually are.

## **2.5 Summary**

Before establishing what recent literature has shown around social media's use and success for charitable marketing, this chapter has performed the necessary step of placing social media into the history of marketing. By showing how a previous trend emerged that emphasised a shift from 'traditional' financial measures to those that include customer perspectives and an appreciation of the organisation's relationship with them, this chapter has shown that the benefits of social media around closer ties with customers open up more opportunities to an area that has been sought and recognised for a significant period of time. The advantages of social media that make it such a promising and interesting area for both marketing and research were then covered before beginning to discuss some of the approaches to measuring these new platforms. The chapter concludes by introducing the considerations for charities using social media, and one of the major challenges is mentioned—that of supporters now being able to obtain a good feeling by showing support on social media, without doing anything in the offline world. The following chapter will discuss some of the issues that arise around this, and covers the literature available on how social media is used, its performance, and what its value is for an organisation.



## Chapter 3

# Background: Social Media Usage and ‘Success’

“Try not. Do... or do not. There is no try.”

— Yoda, Star Wars: Episode V - The Empire Strikes Back

In order to fully understand how best to measure and analyse social media, a review of findings into how social media is actually used is required. Much of the existing work in this area focuses on how individuals use particular social media services, typically classifying their behaviour in some way and revealing the different roles within the online community that are fulfilled by their style of use. While many of these are individual-centric, there appears to be room to build on the foundations provided by them and show the communication styles and behaviour of organisations—rather than individuals—on social media, which would then provide insights into the marketing inputs that they are using and in turn may affect the resulting outputs.

### 3.1 Categorising Social Media Use by Organisations

[Tinati et al. \(2012\)](#) classified Twitter users based on their role in conversations and their communication behaviour. A model was used to classify users as either idea starters, amplifiers, curators or commentators, which is decided upon by the user’s use of Twitter’s retweet functionality—both in terms of how frequently they retweet other ideas, and how often their own messages are shared by others ([Tinati et al., 2012](#)). While a model such as this could be used to analyse organisational behaviour on Twitter (and potentially, other social networks), it is likely however that the communication patterns and roles of such accounts will not align directly with those of standard users, and therefore a more specific categorisation system could be more accurate. This model would, however, be suitable for

analysing the communication profiles of the community *around* the organisation, allowing for the identification of key influential followers of the charity who can be important to target in order to help an idea spread virally (Cha et al., 2010). Interestingly, Cha et al. (2010) found that the indegree of a Twitter user (or how many followers they have) is not linked to their influence, and the number of retweets or mentions received by a user is a better indicator of their potential to engage an audience. This offers support to Tinati et al. (2012)’s classification model based on retweet use, and also indicates that popularity can not be used as a reliable measure of success. Additionally, Cha et al. (2010) suggests that influence is gained over time and therefore requires a long period of investment, indicating that measures in these areas need to take into account a substantial period of time in order to offer a reliable account of the organisation’s—and their community’s—influence and role on the network. Boyd et al. (2010) also examined the retweet mechanism of Twitter, looking in particular at the different ways in which this can be carried out and the motivations behind its use. By retweeting a message, the user is immersing themselves into a conversation, regardless of their motivation behind retweeting in the first place (Boyd et al., 2010). This is an important consideration to take into account as participating in a conversation does not necessarily require a new message to be made; instead the time taken to recognise the contribution of supporters may subsequently increase the engagement that those users have with the organisation. In terms of new, original content, (Evans, 2010, p. 85) describes how sharing content to followers is a “gift”, and can make the organisation’s audience feel more strongly attached. This reflects a different style of communication to retweeting, but nonetheless would have an effect on the audience’s engagement. Due to the differences, it would likely require different measurement techniques, too.

Similar to the model presented by Tinati et al. (2012), but taking into account more than just retweets, is the “social technographics ladder” presented by Li and Bernoff (2008), which groups social media users based on their involvement levels with social media. Each category is described as a “step” in the ladder towards higher engagement, including: inactives, spectators, joiners, collectors, critics and creators (Li and Bernoff, 2008). Progression up the ladder is achieved by performing actions that represent higher levels of involvement or engagement, beginning with consuming content, and increasing from having a profile up to posting comments and publishing original content (Li and Bernoff, 2008). This again focuses on individual users, but strengthens the idea that classifications of how social media are used is an important step in analysing its overall use and performance. More recently, a new framework that focuses more closely on the interactions between users and organisations has been produced: the “social technographics score” (Elliott, 2013). This provides information for the organisation about the type of audience that they have, and offers suggestions regarding how to respond to particular audience behaviours. Taking into account the whole audience, a classification is made based on the levels of social engagement within that community or group, and then depending on whether their primary aim is to discover, explore or engage, the

technographics score can then identify and suggest strategies that the organisation could use—for example an audience that primarily wants to discover may be particularly suited to WOM techniques (Elliott, 2013).

Chan et al. (2010) offer an alternative view by showing that these classifications are not restricted to social media services such as Facebook and Twitter, but can also be applied to the analysis of forum communities too. Eight different user roles are presented in their model, revolving around specific features of behaviour and aspects such as the percentage of bi-directional contacts a user has, which represents two users replying to each other (Chan et al., 2010). Examining features such as these reveals the type of communication that occurs on a site (for example, uni- or bi-directional), which can be a defining attribute of how an individual or organisation utilises these services.

For organisational usage, Waters and Williams (2011) used the four models of public relations to categorise Twitter use by American governmental agencies. These are separated into one-way and two-way models, with the one-way side containing “press agency”—emotionally charged messages potentially used for manipulation—and “public information”—where the approach is still one sided but contains more truthful messages (Waters and Williams, 2011). On the two-way side, the models are “two-way asymmetry”—using market research to create a dialogue in order to obtain information—and “two-way symmetry”—more genuine conversations to develop mutual understanding between organisation and user (Waters and Williams, 2011). While there was a high amount of variation observable in the messages sampled, the public information model was found to be most popular for this category of organisation, suggesting that one-way, informational messages are favoured on Twitter—although as the authors state, this is the most often used model for governmental work anyway (Waters and Williams, 2011). For charities, whether or not this trend is observed may depend on the type of charity involved—some may be more focused on disseminating information, whereas others could want to converse with and discuss their work with supporters.

### 3.1.1 Conversations as Indicators of Engagement and Relationships

In the models for categorising social media use described in Section 3.1 above, both Tinati et al. (2012) and Boyd et al. (2010) focus on analysing retweets as a mechanism for communication and dissemination of topics throughout a network. While Boyd et al. (2010) suggests retweeting is a way of immersing oneself into a conversation, the more obvious sign of engagement with an organisation comes through user-generated content, or the mechanisms through which this is published on social media—for example replies, mentions or comments. Cho et al. (2014) describes comments on Facebook as the highest level of engagement possible as they require more effort than liking or sharing. This indicates that, as a measure of engagement or strength of relationship with an organisation, replies and comments could offer some insights. This is also affected by the way in which

the organisation itself uses social media—Cho et al. (2014) found that people were more likely to comment on Facebook if the nonprofit used two-way, symmetrical conversation (as described in Waters and Williams (2011) above, where the organisation negotiates with supporters, rather than simply try to persuade them) compared to one-way communication. This implies that while evidence of conversations may suggest engagement on social media, a *lack* of them might not be down to the audience itself but simply the wrong type of use by the organisation. Jo and Kim (2003) discusses the link between interactivity and the potential to build relationships on the Web, while Waters et al. (2009) states that an obvious lack of interactivity could turn off potential supporters, highlighting the importance of offering some form of engagement. Interestingly, responses to a brand’s own posts have been shown to vary, with photos obtaining more likes and comments—and for a longer duration—than text statuses, indicating that the format of post may also go some way to determining the response (Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2011). It is therefore imperative to analyse the organisation’s own communication patterns when assessing social media performance to ensure that the results are contextualised by the marketing inputs and strategy offered in each particular case.

Using a single case study, Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013) classified some of the intentions behind users posting textual comments on a Facebook brand page. The most popular category—“suggestions and requests”—indicates that Cho et al. (2014)’s finding regarding two-way symmetrical conversation generating the most comments is apparent here, as these types of post will allow a negotiating discussion to be carried out with the organisation (Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013). Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013) conclude by stating that Facebook is a platform through which increased brand awareness, insights and knowledge for future work and community engagement through conversation can all be facilitated.

### 3.1.2 Engagement and Relationship Building by Charities on Social Media

While the categorisation schemes described above offer ideas regarding how to group types of behaviour on social media, which could be reconfigured to suit organisational use, they provide little in the way of insights into how organisations—particularly charities—have been found to use these sites. However, there has been research into this area that looks at how particular groups of organisations use social media. For example, in a study of USA-based nonprofit organisations, Waters and Jamal (2011) used content analysis to determine the types of message being sent on Twitter, with the finding that one-way messages for sharing information were used primarily. This is supported by a further paper—again focusing on USA nonprofits—which categorised organisations based on the content of their tweets (Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012). Three types of organisational use were discovered: acting as an information source, building a community, and promoting

to and mobilising supporters, with very few of the organisations placed outside of the category for acting as an informational source (Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012). While most of the organisations used in the sample showed some use of dialogue, the suggestion arising from this is that conversation forms only a small part of a larger communication strategy on Twitter that is primarily focused on broadcasting information (Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012). Briones et al. (2011) looked in depth at the American Red Cross and—by using a qualitative approach—were able to investigate the reasons behind why social media was used. Aims ranging from discovering public perception, eliciting feedback and suggestions regarding how to improve, and generating additional media attention were all listed (Briones et al., 2011). Clearly this is not representative of all charities as it is a case study of only one, but it does nonetheless indicate some of the aims that a charity would seek by using social media.

Perceptions regarding the use of social media by charitable organisations do seem to be changing, however. Waters et al. (2009) found that Facebook was primarily seen as a channel for disclosing details of an organisation, indicating at the time that it may not have been utilised for many of the engagement purposes seen today. This could be attributed to social media being a far more novel and less mature phenomenon at the time. Later research by Obar et al. (2011) surveyed advocacy groups’ perception of social media in the USA, finding that nearly all the sampled organisations believed there was a benefit in using it for inspiring civic engagement. Additionally, participants in Obar et al. (2011)’s study were asked to rank social media technologies in terms of their effectiveness for generating civic engagement and collective action. Facebook was ranked first for both of these, suggesting it was becoming an important resource, while Twitter ranked second for civic engagement, suggesting a growing appeal for using the service to reach the public (Obar et al., 2011). This shows that for Facebook at least, perceptions towards the site had changed in the relatively short period of time since Waters et al. (2009)’s results. However, Fussell Sisco and McCorkindale (2013) studied the top twenty breast cancer nonprofit organisations in the USA and suggested that they were not utilising the dialogic nature of social media, with the sites instead being used mainly for one-way dissemination, which indicates that the earlier results of Waters et al. (2009) discussed above could still be valid.

Obar et al. (2011) also discovered that the surveyed groups found that the ability to reach both communities that are already engaged, and those that are not, was particularly useful, especially as it allows the community to grow and for members to be drawn closer together to provide a sense of unity. A limitation with this study, however, is that while each service was ranked depending on its usefulness, it is unclear what each service actually got used for, or what the intended aim was from doing so. Alternatively, Auger (2013) shed some light on how different sites (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) were used—albeit only with a sample of 4 advocacy groups. The content of messages on each site were coded based on their characteristics and function, in order to see how the



organisations were using social media, but this also showed whether the sites appeared to be favoured for different tasks (Auger, 2013). Twitter was used mainly for providing thanks and recognition to supporters, whereas Facebook was for soliciting feedback (Auger, 2013). Guo and Saxton (2013) also examined how US advocacy groups use Twitter. They found that it was especially utilised for “public education”, and providing information to their followers (Guo and Saxton, 2013). Messages that supported the organisation’s core mission with non-advocacy related content, rather than relating to a particular strategy or tactic (for example education, research or lobbying) were more popular, tying in with another of their findings that showed tweets offering information were utilised far more than those to build a community or to call that community to action (Guo and Saxton, 2013). From qualitatively analysing message content, the authors devised a “pyramid model of social media-based advocacy”, growing from “reaching out to people” as the base, to “keeping the flame alive” and finally to “stepping up to action” at the summit, reflecting the decrease in proportion of messages sent for the higher levels of the model (Guo and Saxton, 2013).

### 3.2 Issues with Measuring Social Media: Online Listeners and Slacktivists

The models of social media use above elude to one of the problems with measuring social media use—not everyone uses these tools in the same way, and in some cases, usage is not observable. It is unsurprising that in any community—online or off—there will be some proportion of members who do not interact or contribute, and just consume the content and ideas created by others. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, it began to be established that around 90% of any online community would take this role—labelled as ‘lurkers’—and therefore would contribute very little (Nielsen, 2006). If this is still the case then ‘measuring’ social media directly to determine what outcomes or value it produces is a difficult proposition. However, this may miss some aspects of what social media produces. Takahashi et al. (2003) distinguish between “passive lurkers” and “active lurkers”, where the latter uses the information gained from an online community to subsequently affect an offline setting (Table 3.1). This suggests that even if there is no evidence on social media to show interaction or interest, there may well be value gained from the user merely being connected to the organisation or community. If this is what the majority of the online population choose to do, then large amounts of action for the organisation will be completely disjoint from the social media presence, and therefore will cause measurement to be problematic. Additionally, Crawford (2009) has written about how social media is commonly referred to as giving a voice to participants, yet for any conversation such as this, listening is an equally important role for online engagement. The phrase ‘lurker’ has received such a stigma that Crawford (2009) suggests reconceptualising the whole idea of lurkers to “listeners” as this term reflects more

| Group           | Subgroup                       | Description   |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Active Lurkers  | Active lurkers as propagator   | Shares information with offline contacts.                         |
|                 | Active lurkers as practitioner | Use information gained from online lurking in offline activities. |
| Passive Lurkers | Active lurker candidate        | Thought is affected by lurking in an online community.            |
|                 | Persistent lurker              | Thought is not affected by lurking in an online community.        |

Table 3.1: Classification of lurkers based on [Takahashi et al. \(2003\)](#)

positively the level of importance of this role in any online conversation. On Facebook, estimations of the size of an audience exposed to any post are often lower than in reality as authors tend to use inaccurate measures such as the amount of feedback received, or their friends count—these do not reflect how many users actually saw, or listened to, the post ([Bernstein et al., 2013](#)).

For the remaining users who do interact, it is again difficult to link an online interaction to a resulting action such as donating money. Interacting on social media from an activism or charitable perspective can induce a ‘good feeling’ in supporters when they want to feel involved with the charity. However, there is the possibility that this good feeling then removes the need to act in any other way. [Rotman et al. \(2011\)](#) describe this phenomenon of “slacktivism”—an alternative to offline activism—as:

“low risk, lost-cost activit[ies] via social media, whose purpose is to raise awareness, produce change or grant satisfaction to the person engaged in the activity”

While this kind of behaviour can go some way to producing awareness of a campaign, it is clear that if significant numbers of an already small portion of the audience are only supporting campaigns on social media as a quick way to gain internal satisfaction then measuring performance on the number of supporters would be unreliable ([Rotman et al., 2011](#)). Similar behaviour is described by [Kappler and de Querol \(2011\)](#) as “interpassive behaviour”, and they categorise social media usage profiles to reflect the different reasons driving users to utilise such technologies, and whether or not they are interactive or “interpassive” to mirror [Rotman et al. \(2011\)](#)’s slacktivism. The categories that [Kappler and de Querol \(2011\)](#) define are shown in Table 3.2.

Slacktivism and interpassive behaviour can severely mask the true effect of social media. In an account of one particular activist movement, [Petray \(2011\)](#) explains how the campaign produced a Facebook page which gained over a thousand members and offered

| Category          | Sub-category     | Description of use   | Interpassive/<br>Interactive |
|-------------------|------------------|--|------------------------------|
| Homo Gaudens      | Homo Romanticus  | Impulsive motivation to resist delegating experiences to social media technologies.  | Interactive                  |
|                   | Homo Consumensis | Impulsive motivation to delegate the task of waiting for friends’ responses to social networks, allowing them to focus on other tasks while they wait.   | Interpassive                 |
| Homo Oeconomicus  | Homo Habitus     | Adapt tools to their own leisure activities in order to improve them, but don’t actually delegate the task to online services.   | Interacitve                  |
|                   | Homo Resistensis | Resist using social media.   | Neither                      |
|                   | Homo Utilitatis  | Look for social media tools to perform tasks for them in the easiest possible way.   | Interpassive                 |
| Homo Individualis |                  | Enjoy “looking through the keyhole” of social media, consuming the activities of others without having their own experiences.  | Interpassive                 |
| Homo Socialis     |                  | Motivated to engage with others but delegate this engagement to social media rather than physically engaging. Joining a campaign on social media provides satisfaction of engaging but they are still removed from the actual actions of the campaign. | Interpassive                 |

Table 3.2: Categories and descriptions of socail media users based on the interpassive classification by [Kappler and de Querol \(2011\)](#)

them the chance to donate to the cause through Facebook itself. However, the campaign failed to receive a single transaction through that feature (Petray, 2011). This is a clear indication that high numbers of followers on social media is not necessarily a sign of successful and productive marketing, and suggests that many people may just be engaging in interpassive behaviour as described above. The term “push-button activism” is used by Petray (2011) to describe this, which in similarity with slacktivism refers to the provision of a good feeling of involvement with a campaign, albeit with minimal involvement that nonetheless provides the potential to strengthen the collective identity of the community around the movement. As this example clearly shows that identity strengthening does not necessarily translate into action, Petray (2011) suggests that digital marketing should therefore be integrated as part of an overall marketing strategy, and not relied on by itself, in order to prevent an overwhelming amount of inactive supporters.

While the three examples shown in Rotman et al. (2011), Kappler and de Querol (2011) and Petray (2011) clearly indicate that there is an issue regarding the level of engagement with social media campaigns by those who do interact, there is also a common theme that suggests this may be overlooking value created indirectly through this behaviour. There might be the assumption, based on these papers, that followers on social media are lazy users with little use and who don’t care about charitable campaigns enough to commit to anything more than obtaining a good feeling from showing that they are (in the loosest possible way) associated with them. However, both Rotman et al. (2011) and Petray (2011) stress that this does have some advantages, even if users are not engaging in what would appear to be a useful way. There is the possibility that these supporters do enough to motivate other individual contributions, which is supported by Das et al. (2008) who states that a campaign needs to show that others are interested in the same cause in order to increase response rates. Based on this, it may be pertinent to study the strength of a community around an organisation, rather than just its size, in order to determine the level of support to a cause it could provide, and the potential it holds for creating action. Additionally, Fussell Sisco and McCorkindale (2013) suggest that while measuring the size of a community does not indicate success, it could have some bearing on the perceived credibility of the organisation and so can not be ignored completely.

There are also a number of social and psychological theories that are relevant to the discussion on what slacktivism and lurking really contribute to social marketing. Lee and Hsieh (2013) looked at the influence of the moral balancing effect with regards to slacktivism, in order to determine whether a slacktivist action can actually hurt a subsequent action. Their findings revealed that there was no evidence for “moral licensing” (when a good action has previously been performed and the actor can now feel less guilty about not acting), but there was an indication that “moral cleansing” did occur (where an unethical deed—or no deed at all—was carried out previously, and the actor now feels compelled to make up for it by performing a good, ethical choice) (Lee and Hsieh, 2013). In the case of their study, participants were asked to sign a petition and then to donate

their participation fee to charity (some participants were shown a related charity, others an unrelated charity). Moral cleansing occurred when it was noticed that participants donated significantly more money to unrelated charities when they had not signed the initial petition - indicating the possibility of moral cleansing (Lee and Hsieh, 2013). Lee and Hsieh (2013) also examines the presence of cognitive dissonance in these situations. This refers to an inner drive to maintain consistency between attitudes and behaviours, and when a disjuncture arises between these then the individual enters a state of ‘cognitive dissonance’, which is rectified by changing behaviour to return to a consistent state (Lee and Hsieh, 2013). In their study, it was found that when the initial petition was signed, the chances of a donation being made increased - although the amount donated was unaffected, and the effect was only present when the charity to donate to was related to the petition theme. These findings are important in that they suggest slacktivist actions will not deter users from acting in the future, whereas a choice *not* to ‘like’ a Facebook page for example may lead to the user subsequently choosing to act through moral cleansing. The combination of these findings is reinforced as the prevention of cognitive dissonance reflects the potential for a ‘slacktivist’ user to act in the future and present a consistent image of themselves, which supports the lack of evidence for moral licensing which would have rendered this unnecessary.

Taking this into account, what are the resulting implications for charitable marketing on social media? The consensus in the literature appears to be that large proportions of interacting users may only interpassively click to show their support for a cause, and will then perform very few other interactions on social media to reflect their interest or desire to help the organisation. With such a high proportion of users acting as lurkers, and many more involved in this kind of behaviour, questions arise about how to determine the effectiveness of social media marketing from the social media sites themselves. If moral balancing and cognitive dissonance theory are considered then it is clear that the effect of social media is wider and greater than merely what happens on social media sites themselves.

### 3.3 Social Media Marketing Effectiveness

Above, it has been argued that social media introduces unique features and possibilities for marketing, that social media can be used in different ways by different individuals—or organisations—and that some of the effects of social media marketing will be unnoticed because of the small numbers of publicly engaging supporters. This section will assess the literature to shed light on the current perception of social media’s effectiveness for charitable causes, using a number of examples of well-known social media campaigns.

In March 2012, the Invisible Children organisation released a half-hour video documentary—Kony 2012—online to spread virally and raise awareness of the Ugandan warlord Joseph

Kony, and promote worldwide collaboration to stop him<sup>1</sup>. An emotional film that as of May 2014 has received more than 99 million views on YouTube alone<sup>2</sup>, Kony 2012 became the fastest spreading viral video at the time—receiving more than 70 million views in its first five days (Steel, 2012). The video achieved the organisation’s goal of raising awareness of Kony, yet part of the campaign that involved physical, offline action—‘Cover the Night’—where participants were due to blanket cities worldwide with campaign posters, ultimately failed to reach the same levels (Carroll, 2012). While the campaign claims to have succeeded in persuading international governments to support the region, and to stop Kony’s group, the final goal of capturing Kony has so far eluded them<sup>3</sup>. This example is a fascinating case of social media use for charitable or activist purposes, and shows explicitly that online support and exposure is by no means a guarantee of offline success or even commitment.

Bal et al. (2013) assessed the properties of the Kony 2012 video that led to it spreading so widely, using the SPIN framework proposed initially by Mills (2012). Four key elements of viral marketing that determine its success are identified: the spreadability of the content (S), the propagativity of the content and how this propagation is facilitated (P), integration of multiple media and social media channels (I), and the reinforcement of the message or creation of a nexus (N) around the content (Mills, 2012). Bal et al. (2013) claim that all of these factors are rated as ‘high’ for the Kony 2012 video. Spreadability was so because of the short messages around the campaign that were shared on Twitter, the motivation around the concerning nature of the video, and the fact that viewers were encouraged to share as a difference could be made by doing so (Bal et al., 2013). Propagativity was also high because of the wide-ranging utilisation of social media channels, including YouTube, Facebook and Twitter which all allow for content to be shared quickly and easily, and this—along with the coverage in traditional media—also shows high levels of integration (Bal et al., 2013). Finally a high level of nexus was achieved through additional support materials that continued the video’s narrative and reinforced the message—with two additional videos also released (Bal et al., 2013). It appears that ‘success’ on social media is multifaceted and a wide-spreading viral message that raises awareness is not guaranteed to produce any further action. Campaigns therefore require particular targets—do they want to reach people, engage with people, or get people to do something—and based on these the outcomes and success criteria will vary greatly. Furthermore, the coverage received in mainstream media may have helped increase the exposure of the video, but shows that offline integration does not lead to similar levels of offline action.

An arguably more effective, but unplanned and spontaneous example can be found in March 2014 when the ‘#nomakeupselfie’ trend raised over £8 million within six days in the UK (Cancer Research UK, 2014). As people began posting pictures of themselves

<sup>1</sup><http://invisiblechildren.com/kony/>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4MnpzG5Sqc>

<sup>3</sup><http://invisiblechildren.com/kony/#epic-progress>

without wearing any makeup on social media, Cancer Research UK advised them on how they could help to raise awareness of its work, and increase support through donations (Cancer Research UK, 2014). Participants were asked to share the pictures of themselves, include instructions on how others could donate to the charity, and also nominate their friends to do the same, using the #nomakeupselfie hashtag (Press Association, 2014). This took advantage of the ‘social’ aspect of social media, and the interpersonal relationships that these networks are used to manage, as well as the popularity of ‘selfies’ (self-portrait pictures of oneself to show them at a particular time or place) at the time, which led to the word becoming Oxford Dictionaries’ word of the year for 2013<sup>4</sup>. The outcome of this campaign indicates that positive action *can* be achieved on social media, although the rapidness of the viral spread around what was trending at the time shows that there is likely to be a case of sparking the requisite levels of attention within a short window of opportunity. The fact that this was an unplanned campaign that grew from what was already becoming popular on social media, also suggests that a pertinent course of action for charities using social media is to be as engaged with what is occurring online as possible, so that any advantage can be taken when relevant events develop. However this can also produce mixed outcomes, such as the ‘Ice Bucket Challenge’ that occurred during 2014. For this campaign, people were nominated to record a short video of a bucket of iced water being poured over themselves, and then to go on and nominate others to do the same, or donate to charity. The campaign has raised over \$100m for a US-based motor neurone disease charity, and over £4.5m for a UK-based charity with the same cause (McVeigh, 2014). On Facebook alone, the BBC reported that 28 million people have either uploaded, liked or commented upon a related video (Townsend, 2014). However other charities have attempted to use the same approach—essentially hijacking the campaign—for their own causes, and there was a subsequent backlash when the US Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis Association attempted to patent the phrase “ice bucket challenge”—coupled with concerns over the amount of money paid to the charity’s top staff (McVeigh, 2014). This shows that even when a campaign such as this succeeds in a financial sense, the viral nature of social media means that attention can quickly be drawn away from the main cause, and in turn create some negative results. Quoted by the BBC, the director of not for profit communications company ‘Nfpsynergy’ summarised this by describing social media as “extraordinarily powerful for charities but it’s not something they can particularly control - campaigns like this are always a bonus” (Townsend, 2014).

Returning to the idea of slacktivism discussed earlier in this chapter, there are also suggestions that the effectiveness of social media may be limited to the role it plays in helping supporters gain inner satisfactions through the publicity of their help. Chell and Mortimer (2013) discuss the value that supporters receive through “conspicuous donation behaviour” (CDB), and how this can create emotional value (internal pleasure) and social

<sup>4</sup><http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/press-releases/oxford-dictionaries-word-of-the-year-2013/>



value related to their social status. CDB refers to what [Grace and Griffin \(2009\)](#) describe as:

“[T]he act of donating to charitable causes via the visible display of charitable merchandise or the public recognition of the donation.”

Key to this definition is the word “visible” as this allows public recognition, and so this behaviour represents those who donate in order to be seen to have done so ([Grace and Griffin, 2009](#)). Social media provide public platforms through which individuals’ actions can be promoted and recognised, which may be causing an increase of activity on these sites compared to the offline world. [Chell and Mortimer \(2013\)](#) argue that CDB extends beyond the receipt of tangible rewards (charitable merchandise), and is also facilitated through the receipt of “virtual” rewards on social media, while their results also suggest that the increase in social and emotional value gained from these could increase the chances of repeated behaviour in the future. This study regarded participants responses around an offline donation—giving blood—and therefore the results are based around how they would want to be ‘recognised’ on social media for doing so; however when the actions are online to begin with—as in the Kony 2012 example above—it is unclear whether the self-initiated process of conspicuously sharing the video would incentivise further action.

The Kony 2012 and #nomakeupselfie examples demonstrate the varying effects that the intentions of an audience can have on the outcome of a campaign. Taking into account slacktivism and conspicuous behaviours, it is possible to see that the success of an online campaign may in part be down to how the audience wants to be perceived. Indeed, [Saxton and Wang \(2013\)](#) claim that the scope and performance of fundraising via social media is dependant on the abilities, preferences and connections of the supporters, as much as it is on the organisation itself. [Saxton and Wang \(2013\)](#) go on to state that a charity’s Facebook audience carries out two separate activities: “viral fundraising” by the majority of the audience who promote the campaign and help to source donations, and donating itself which is carried out by a much smaller subset of the audience. The difficulty of converting supporters from a role of ‘liking’ and promoting causes, to one of actually donating, is one of the key issues with social media ([Saxton and Wang, 2013](#)). [Saxton and Wang \(2013\)](#) refer to “small-gift donors” and “impulse donating” as two growing groups on social media—donors on platforms such as Facebook Causes<sup>5</sup> typically donate small amounts, and social networks appear to facilitate socially pressured donations to quickly improve social standing—which indicate that particular strategies are required in order to take advantage of the social media environment.

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<sup>5</sup><https://www.causes.com/> Causes is an online campaigning platform that has a Facebook application through which supporters can create and join ‘causes’ related to issues they are interested in, and make donations to the relevant organisation.



| Issue  | Reference                                      | Description  |
|--|--|--|
| Social media strategies producing different results. | <a href="#">Waters and Williams (2011)</a>     | Use of one-way and two-way models of public relations.               |
|  | <a href="#">Elliott (2013)</a>                 | Social technographics score, and matching a strategy to an audience. |
|  | <a href="#">Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013)</a> | Facebook facilitates numerous different outcomes.                    |
|  | <a href="#">Lovejoy and Saxton (2012)</a>      | Three main types of organisational use are adopted on Twitter.       |
|  | <a href="#">Guo and Saxton (2013)</a>          | Pyramid model of social media-based advocacy.                        |
| Audience responses to social media marketing.        | <a href="#">Rotman et al. (2011)</a>           | Slacktivism online.  |
|  | <a href="#">Kappler and de Querol (2011)</a>   | Interpassive behaviour.  |
|  | <a href="#">Lee and Hsieh (2013)</a>           | Moral balancing and cognitive dissonance.                            |
|  | <a href="#">Bal et al. (2013)</a>              | Successful viral spread does not mean offline success.               |

Table 3.3: Example sources to summarise the literature themes.

### 3.4 The Value of Social Media for Charities

The literature review has so far covered the aspects of social media based and charitable marketing that make them different propositions compared to other forms of marketing. It has then shown that there are many issues around how social media services are used—which can produce different results and are therefore suitable for different goals—and that the way in which audiences respond to social media marketing may create difficulties in establishing the value and success it creates (see summary in Table 3.3). This final section of background review will cover the perceptions of social media value that are currently offered in the literature.

Impact from social media marketing can create value for a charitable brand, but as described by [Hennig-Thurau et al. \(2010\)](#), this can be positive or negative depending on how it is managed:

“In the era of new media, managing customer relationships is like playing pinball - companies serve up a “marketing ball” (brands and brand-building messages) into a cacophonous environment, which is then diverted and often accelerated by new media “bumpers,” which change the offering’s course in

chaotic ways. After the marketing ball is in play, marketing managers continue to guide it with agile use of the “flippers,” but the ball does not always go where it is intended to and the slightest miscue can be amplified into a catastrophic crisis.”

This is later compared to traditional marketing being like bowling—“one-directional” and “linear”—and [Hennig-Thurau et al. \(2013\)](#) point out that the ways of keeping score in these two games are different, and therefore the assessment of value and success for social media marketing requires new and alternate measures. One of the big changes is that consumers (supporters) have far more power to create content that can determine the overall value, and therefore the assessment of social media’s contribution must cover both organisation- and user-created content ([Hennig-Thurau et al., 2013](#)).

The resulting value of social media can come in many forms. [Schaupp and Bélanger \(2014\)](#) describe both the precursory desires of small business to adopt social media and the resulting value. Effective antecedents to social media use were found to be technology competence, customer pressure and advanced mobile environments (for example the availability of smartphones), therefore these may be seen as the initial determining factors for seeing value in social media ([Schaupp and Bélanger, 2014](#)). Four “value dimensions” of social media are also found to be associated with social media usage, revolving around its impacts on internal operations, sales, marketing and customer service ([Schaupp and Bélanger, 2014](#)). Each of these areas show where social media value is perceived to be created, and the range in them demonstrates the breadth in value creation it can offer.

Using a set of antecedents focusing on the intended outcomes, rather than the context of the organisation at the time (as in [Schaupp and Bélanger \(2014\)](#) above), [Franklin et al. \(2014\)](#) describe approaches to measuring the value of an online community. The authors indicate that the community’s value will be dependant on what that community was initially set up to achieve, and that these reasons can be classified into four key groups ([Franklin et al., 2014](#)). The reasons are grouped as “thought leadership” (to generate ideas), “operations” (addressing the operation of an organisation, including mobilising supporters to create change), “service delivery” (improving or developing the delivery of a particular service, such as providing feedback on products) and “building relationships” (creating new or stronger relationships with members) ([Franklin et al., 2014](#)). Each of these purpose groups has varying relationships with risk mitigation and reward generation, which in turn allow the potential benefits to be assessed (Table 3.4). These risk and reward profiles allow the value of social media to be seen across the different types of community that can form around an organisation. Interestingly there is as much focus on risk as there is reward, indicating that much of the positive value from social media and online communities could stem from the prevention of negative value. [Franklin et al. \(2014\)](#) also discusses the “community maturity lifecycle” to highlight that the value expectations of a community are determined by what stage the community is

in—for example has it sufficiently formed, is it growing, or is it ailing? Each of these different stages will be associated with different value expectations yet [Franklin et al. \(2014\)](#) point out that “the benefits are often too intangible and complex to be reliably tied to any specific monetary value”, resulting in a difficulty in ascertaining where some of these stages will occur.

[Seraj \(2012\)](#) looks at the characteristics of an online community that creates value for its members. The characteristics that lead to perceived value can also be applied to value from the organisation or brand’s perspective—in [Seraj \(2012\)](#)’s paper a detailed case study of one specific community that is not tied to any one managing brand is used (Airliners.net). Firstly, the aspect of intellectual value is described as how content is co-created between members of the community, and when this is of high quality, value is generated ([Seraj, 2012](#)). This can be seen from the organisational perspective as the intellectual value of receiving good quality, productive feedback, and knowledge about supporter-led initiatives to promote the brand. The second type of value is social value, which emanates from stronger relationships developing between members that creates loyalty within the community and produces interactivity ([Seraj, 2012](#)). For a brand, this would represent repeated engagements from community members to show their loyalty and that a developed relationship has been built. Finally, the cultural value of the community comes from the self-governance of the community itself and the visibility of cultural norms within the group, which creates trust in members and therefore increases the chances of them staying loyal ([Seraj, 2012](#)). This would be expected in a brand’s community, whereby the culture of the community could be used to increase trust and loyalty with potential supporters.

Interestingly, and a noteworthy point, is that the papers referred to in this subsection are not directly related to charitable or non-profit organisations. While there are many papers that discuss how social media is used by charities, and report on results of particular cases, there is very little on what the actual value of social media is for these organisations. However, the literature described above shows the variety of value that is created on social media, and these aspects are likely to be applicable to charities. This thesis aims to assess the value created by social media particularly for charities, in order to address this current gap.

### 3.5 Background Themes

Chapter 2 detailed the way in which approaches to measuring marketing have changed, highlighting a general appreciation for the need to shift towards the customer perspective and the importance of relationships between customer and brand. Social media provides opportunities to carry this out on an unprecedented scale thanks to the vast amounts of data that customers willingly provide on the Web. However the literature reviewed

|                      | <b>Thought Leadership</b>  | <b>Operations</b>   | <b>Service Delivery</b>   | <b>Building Relationships</b>   |
|----------------------|--|---|---|---|
| Reward Enhancement   | Innovation and generation of ideas.  | Transformation through mobilising supporters.   | Enhancement through the community extending the offered service.                                | Cohesion through deepened relationships with members.   |
| Volatility Reduction | Knowledge through calling on known members of the community who can provide the best information.                        | Standards that can be debated and raised in the online community to ensure the community remains effective and beneficial.        | Quality, developed through regular monitoring of and acting upon the requests of the community. | Trust that allows members to invest in the community because of the overall reliability of the service. |
| Risk Avoidance       | Reputation of the brand managed through the dissemination of ideas and arguments that increase the community’s standing. | Prevention of adverse conditions in operations, such as using supporter forums for customer service to reduce resources required. | Vigilance gained through using the community as an “early warning system”.                      | Reaching large audiences through online searchers, that could provide new community members.            |

Table 3.4: Potential benefits of communities depending on their purpose. Adapted from the “Evidence of worth model for online communities” in [Franklin et al. \(2014\)](#)

in this chapter has shown that use of social media is not uniform across all users—there are different ‘roles’ which people take on and can be ‘labelled’ as regarding their level of interactivity and engagement with the sites. While it appears that charities are increasingly using social media services for engagement and relationship building, the biggest issue regarding the assessment of whether or not they produce tangible value is around the large proportions of users who do not interact at all. Whether these users should be labelled as ‘lurkers’ or a more appreciative ‘listeners’ is a debate that seeks to establish their true contribution to a community—and clearly the absence of a social media based interaction does not mean that a user has not been influenced by what they have seen. This debate is further intensified when it appears that high levels of social media interaction around a campaign can translate into a comparatively small amount of ‘offline’ action—with slacktivism winning over real activism—so that the main aim of a campaign is left unfulfilled, as in the Kony 2012 example discussed above. Analogies to games of pinball show that the chaotic nature of social media marketing—and the level of understanding about what value it creates in general—seems to be low, especially when focused on charities.

### 3.6 Research Questions

Based on the background literature described above, an overall research question was devised that builds on the entirety of the literature review and picks up on the lack of charity-specific information available in Section 3.4:

What is the value in using social media for charitable organisations?

The social media sphere is so broad and vast, however, that by itself this question would unlikely address the relevant issues at hand. Therefore, three additional sub-questions were proposed to produce the insights required to build an argument to answer this question:

**RQ1** How and why do charities use social media?

**RQ2** Why do supporters connect and interact with charities on social media?

**RQ3** What evidence is there on social media sites themselves to show successful engagement and value production?

RQ1 was designed to assess what the actual success criteria for charities on social media were, and to build on Section 3.1 that presented various existing models for classifying social media use by individuals, but lacked similar attention to organisational use.

Similarly, RQ2 was created in order to determine what value the supporters themselves perceived to be gained from using social media; the ‘success’ and value of an online community will be dependant on what the community members want to get out of it. Finally, RQ3 was formulated to allow social media analysis to be used in order to establish the level to which these current motivations (from both the charity- and supporter-side) appear to be reflected in current social media usage. The methodology by which these questions were addressed is discussed in the following chapter.

### **3.7 Summary**

The two background chapters have covered the existing relevant literature on marketing analysis, social media use and value, and how charities use these services for marketing. A number of issues have been raised, emphasising the lack of clarity around what the value of various social media technologies are for charitable organisations. Based on this, a primary research question was devised as an investigative means by which to study the area. Three subquestions were also designed in order to provide necessary insights into the main question. The following chapter moves on to discuss the methodological decisions that were taken in order to design an approach to gaining the findings required to offer answers to these questions.



## Chapter 4

# A Mixed Methods Approach to Studying Social Media Value

“If there is an end for all we do, it will be the good achievable by action.”

— Aristotle

This chapter details the design of the studies used in order to explore each question detailed in the previous chapter, and the overarching methodology involved. Firstly, the chapter presents a discussion on the chosen philosophical approach, which in turn provides a rationale for choosing a mixed methods research design, based on the need for both qualitative and quantitative insights into these questions. From there, the design around how the methods were combined is presented, before the chosen methods themselves are discussed—with reasons and supporting evidence to reinforce their selection. Finally the design is summarised diagrammatically to portray the approach taken to answering the research questions generated in the previous chapter.

### 4.1 Philosophical Approach

The first possibility for this research was to follow a strictly empirical approach. This would emphasise quantitative methods and focus on using the scientific method to create and test hypotheses about the effects of charitable marketing, and then measure the relationship between different variables involved ([Sale et al., 2002](#)). The strong bias towards quantitative techniques would provide significant possibilities for measuring the effect of social media and determining campaign performance for this research. However, as the literature review above has highlighted, a large number of the effects of social media were unlikely to be directly measurable on the Web itself and would require further investigation to understand. A qualitative approach, grounded in constructivism and interpretivism could have been used to favour this element of the research. Following this



approach would have allowed the researcher to construct theories around the research questions based on in-depth studies of particular cases that developed and changed as rapidly as the constructivist paradigm states that reality does—in contrast to the empirical approach which would have insisted on there only being one, objective truth that can be tested for and measured (Sale et al., 2002).

In order to find a suitable balance of these approaches, an examination of the research questions, and the objectives that they sought to achieve was required. The investigative nature of the questions, based on the apparent lack of understanding about what value social media actually provides—as picked up on in the literature review—indicated that an exploratory, rather than conclusive, design was required (Malhotra et al., 2012, p. 87). Alternatively, the research required an inductive approach focused on theory-development, and gaining an understanding of the research area, rather than a deductive approach to test theories about social media's success. Simply measuring social media to 'test it' would have left many aspects of its value uncovered, and it is these that contribute to understanding the bigger picture of what the value actually is. To fit this research design, a purely quantitative approach would therefore not have been suitable. However, these methods were recognised as being useful for determining the extent to which the phenomena that would emerge in any resulting theory actually existed, and so were not excluded completely. On the other hand, qualitative, constructivist techniques would have allowed a more thorough understanding of what was actually happening—and what it meant—to be built up in regards to the effect social media has on supporters, and why this may or may not create and induce charitable action. Reducing the decision to a straight decision between these two philosophical paradigms, as described by Alexander (2006), encourages the choice between solely quantitative or qualitative methods, and rather a more expansive technique that allows methods to be selected to match the questions being asked at the time is required. In areas where the underlying complexity requires a variety of perspectives and data, such as this—observing data on social media will not provide a complete picture of social media's actual performance in generating action—, a more pragmatic, mixed methods strategy is required (Sale et al., 2002). Therefore, a mixed methods approach was settled upon, and the next section will discuss this type of research.

#### 4.1.1 Pragmatism and Mixed Methods Research

Mixed methods research encourages the combination of approaches from paradigms such as empiricism and constructivism, along with supporting an alternative paradigm—pragmatism—which incorporates both quantitative and qualitative research (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007, p. 10). In a methodological sense, it involves combining the quantitative and qualitative approaches at all stages of the research—from the initial assumptions (empirical or constructivist) to the data collection, analysis and finally the

development of conclusions (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007, p. 18). As a research design, it allows flexibility in the way that these approaches are intertwined. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) explain that mixed methods does not seek to replace either quantitatively or qualitatively focused research, but draws on the strengths of each across studies, and state that:

“Taking a non-purist or compatibilist or mixed position allows researchers to mix and match design components that offer the best chance of answering their specific research questions.”

Furthermore, pragmatic research allows a balanced position to be taken, which can be particularly important in interdisciplinary research such as Web Science where communication is required among various scholars who may each be firmly based within a different philosophical paradigm (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Pragmatism allows both quantitative and qualitative methods to be used within a study, and focuses on the question as the most important element, rather than the philosophical worldview or methods to be used (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007, p. 26). There is an acceptance of using “what works” to achieve results, suiting the methods and approaches at any one point to what is required and necessary, rather than a previously agreed upon set of rules (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007, p. 26-27). Overall, this makes the pragmatic, mixed methods approach particularly suited to this specific research.

#### 4.1.1.1 Mixed Methods Research Design Options

Different design types are possible within mixed methods relating to the way in which qualitative and quantitative elements of the research are combined. Four major classifications of mixed methods design are described by Creswell and Plano Clark (2007, p. 58-79), out of which the general categories are summarised in Table 4.1. Additional models are present within each category, but at this point only the overall designs are considered.

Each of the research designs would have advantages for this research as they all allow the incorporation of qualitative and quantitative analyses. In contrast to many other disciplines, marketing has focused (seventy-nine per cent of studies) on sequential mixed methods design (where one method is carried out after the other, such as explanatory or exploratory), with suggested reasons being that article reviewers request a second data type to be added to single method designs, or the influence of commercial marketing research firms who emphasise preliminary focus groups to shape a subsequent study (Harrison and Reilly, 2011). This suggests that other approaches, such as those carried out concurrently through triangulation, are not necessarily less favoured, but are not planned and a second data collection method is added as an afterthought to rectify

| Category             | Description  | Weighting                                  | Timing           | Details   |
|----------------------|--|--|------------------|---|
| <b>Triangulation</b> | Concurrent but separate study of both quantitative and qualitative data, which are then merged together to create a single interpretation. | Equal                                      | One Stage        | Each piece of data is analysed independently, but there is the risk that the results from each do not match.  |
| <b>Embedded</b>      | One data set acts to support findings based primarily on the opposite data format.   | Favours either qualitative or quantitative | One or Two Stage | Qualitative or quantitative data are used for a different purpose to answer a specific question in an overall study that favours the other data type. |
| <b>Explanatory</b>   | Qualitative data is used to explain quantitative results.  | Favours quantitative                       | Two Stage        | Qualitative data provides additional insight into surprising or outlying results, but requires additional time.                                       |
| <b>Exploratory</b>   | Qualitative results inform the later quantitative method.  | Favours qualitative                        | Two Stage        | Qualitative approach explores a phenomenon, before using quantitative to interpret these results, but requires additional time.                       |

Table 4.1: Categories of mixed methods research design by (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007, p. 58-79)

lacking research design. With only twelve per cent of studies utilising concurrent design, there is no apparent rigorous best-practice template for doing so yet (Harrison and Reilly, 2011). However, discrediting triangulation design based on this and without looking at its advantages would be unjustifiable. A pragmatic, mixed methods approach can require equal weighting of the two data types, which triangulation supports, and is necessary in this research to ensure that each data source is validated and confirmed (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007, p. 82). In Creswell and Plano Clark (2011, p. 77), the triangulation model is reformed into the “convergent parallel design”, yet the features essentially remain the same. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011, p. 77) describe one of the purposes of this

model as “synthesizing complementary quantitative and qualitative results to develop a more complete understanding of a phenomenon”, which is what this current research set out to do with charitable marketing on social media, while its foundations are also situated in pragmatism, which was identified above as a suitable philosophy in the case (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011, p. 74).

## 4.2 Mixed Methods Research Design

In order to design the mixed methods approach to answering the research questions, a split was made to divide the main portion of the study from an early pilot study. Separate from the main methodology, the pilot study followed a quantitative approach to elicit, based on available literature, what aspects of social media value could be measured and the lack of understanding around their context without any qualitative methods to support them. This pilot stage was carried out in the early stages of this research, and therefore was used to inform the main methodological design.

For the main stage of the research, however, the following overarching methodology was designed. The convergent triangulation model, being the purest representation of triangulation—as it consists of concurrently executing the quantitative and qualitative portions, comparing and contrasting the results from each, and placing equal weighting on them both—was chosen as this fits the overall aims of the research with regards to gaining a deeper understanding of social media value (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007, p. 63). With triangulation and convergence, one of the primary challenges relates to the consequences of what to do should the two converging datasets not agree in their assessment of a particular situation. In order to mitigate this, it was necessary to consider what type of data would be collected (Table 4.2). Examining the research questions allowed this to be established. RQ1 was primarily framed as a qualitative question, seeking to understand why charities use social media. While similar, RQ2 focused on the supporters, and as a much larger population than charities, it therefore suited a quantitative approach. As these two questions approached the same subject—why social media is used, or what value is seen in it—an important aspect of the triangulation would occur when they were compared. Contrasting results would indicate potential disparities in the value judgement of social media between charity and supporter, and could therefore have shown interesting findings regarding this. Consequently, this issue with triangulation is largely mitigated by the design of the research itself, and by using each method to essentially test a different element of value in the overall equation. The final question, RQ3 was necessarily quantitative, relying on statistical measures and social network analysis to assess the prevalence of whatever each party—charity or supporter—claimed social media was used for. This approach again allowed for disparity in the triangulation between the stakeholders’ stated intentions and actual behaviour to highlight interesting, relevant results, rather than cause problems in the research.

| Dataset   | Data Type    |
|---|--------------|
| How and why charities use social media                  | Qualitative  |
| Why supporters interact with charities on social media  | Quantitative |
| Social media analysis and statistics to show engagement | Quantitative |

Table 4.2: Types of data to be collected

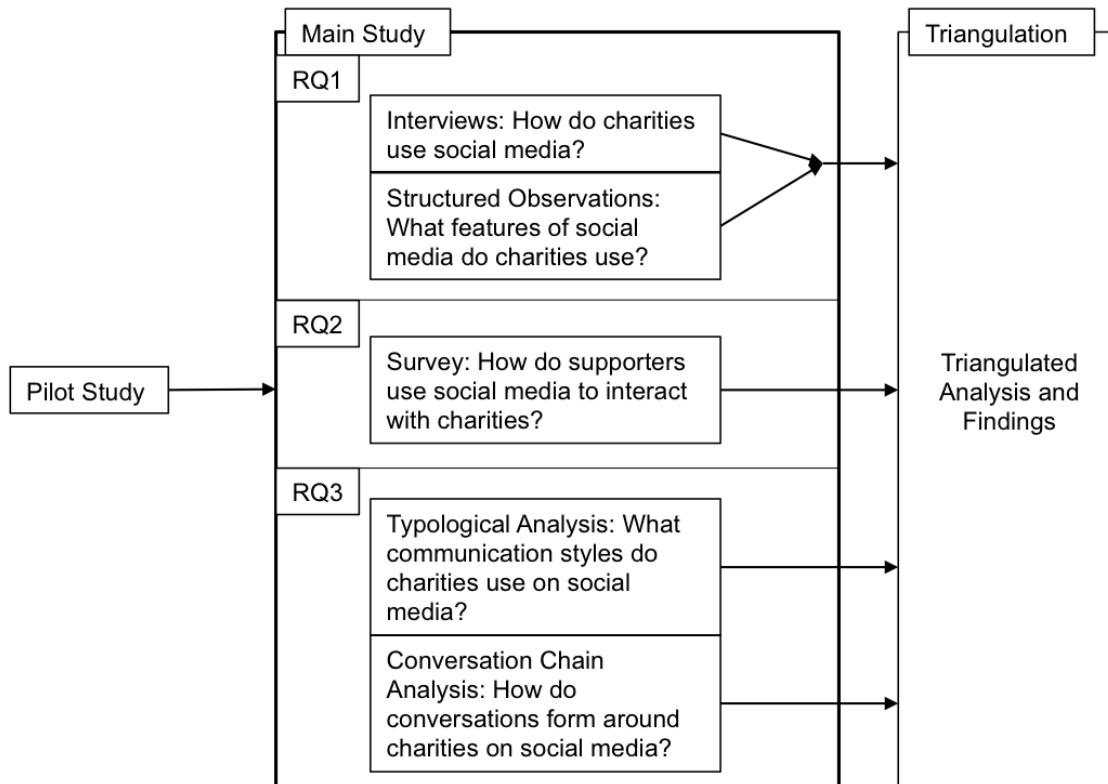


Figure 4.1: Overview of the methods used within this research and the triangulation process

The convergent triangulation design was therefore adopted as explained above. While this typology-based approach was suitable to plan the research, it became apparent throughout the research process that a more dynamic approach was required and additional mixing of methods was carried out for RQ1 and RQ3. A small set of complementary quantitative data was added to understand how charities use social media in RQ1, while a small-scale qualitative dataset was used to help enhance the understanding of RQ3. This allowed a greater deal of flexibility within the research, and in a sense enabled a number of smaller triangulations to each feed in to a larger, overall convergence of analyses. The following section explains the choice of methods that were used in this research and formed the research design shown in Figure 4.1 using the triangulation process.

## 4.3 Methods

Based on the methodological decisions described above, the forthcoming section discusses the methods used within this research in order to provide answers to the questions that have been raised so far. These methods form the overall research design shown in Figure 4.1.

### 4.3.1 Pilot Study

Figure 4.1 begins with a pilot study. This was carried out in the early phases of this research, preceding many of the main methodological decisions discussed above and so a quantitative approach that was separate from the main study was followed. The aim was to find what measures were used in the literature, categorise them, and then assess what they could contribute to the understanding of social media value. Two case studies based on “comparative design” were used so that results of example measurements could be compared and assessed (Bryman, 2008, p. 58). While this could be criticised for being a very small sample that cannot be generalised to the wider population—as with much case study research—it was decided that at this stage an exploration into how various metrics can be used was all that was required, rather than claims to be made about the entire world (Bryman, 2008, p. 57). Statistics relating to the metrics elicited from the literature were then calculated, giving this pilot study a firm quantitative grounding. This study is outlined in more detail in Chapter 5.

### 4.3.2 Main Study

Based on the insights gained from the pilot study above, the methods to fit the triangulation were chosen and are detailed below. These were selected around the three research questions listed earlier and therefore each sought to provide a level of understanding that would contribute to the final summary when triangulated with the others.

#### 4.3.2.1 Interviews and Thematic Analysis

Existing studies that have been detailed in the background section of this thesis were reviewed in order to choose the methods for this study. Consideration was given to ascertaining why—given the prevalence and popularity of social media research in recent years, and the number of relevant studies in this area—a low level of understanding about the value of social media remains. In many studies in the literature review—primarily those around how organisations use social media—content analysis of messages or pages was used. Studies such as Waters and Jamal (2011), Lovejoy and Saxton (2012), Auger (2013) and Guo and Saxton (2013) all used content analysis in some way to make claims

about how charities use social media, taking advantage of the readily and easily available data on social networking sites. In a recent publication, [Saxton and Waters \(2014\)](#) picked up on a similar trend, stating that “[t]he majority of research has searched for evidence of organizational use of the web site to generate dialogue with the public” and that “[m]ore recently scholars have begun to address these same issues with respect to social media”. The papers that [Saxton and Waters \(2014\)](#) referred to—for example [Bortree and Seltzer \(2009\)](#) and [Waters et al. \(2009\)](#)—again used content analysis techniques to perform this, which further emphasises the dominance of this technique in the area. However, it seemed that in order to increase understanding in this area, a deeper investigation into why particular organisations use these sites—and how—was required, and this was unlikely to be elicited from analysing large samples of charities’ social media pages. Instead, it was recognised that the thoughts, views and opinions of members of staff *within* the social media teams of each charity were required, in order to ground any claims made by the other strands of this research into the stated objectives of the charities themselves. Interviews allow deep and meaningful data to be gathered which may not have been possible to elicit if other research methods had been used ([Byrne, 2004](#)). Therefore, interviews were chosen as a research method to determine the reasons behind social media use by charities in RQ1.

Interviews have been used in previous research exploring the use of social networks in the charity sector. [Quinton and Fennemore \(2012\)](#) interviewed twelve charity representatives and three marketing agencies to determine the adoption of social networks by UK charities. Six main themes were used to structure the interviews around: “challenges faced by the industry, the online social networks currently being employed, the rationale for adopting online social networks, whether the strategies adopted were effective or not, the tactics used and the results and finally suggestions as to the future direction of use”, and this reflected the types of questions required to elicit the charities’ views on the area ([Quinton and Fennemore, 2012](#)). Similar qualitative analysis has also been carried out in research in this area utilising surveys. In one such study qualitative responses from a survey were used to determine organisations’ views towards social media and how these tools are used ([Obar et al., 2011](#)). The qualitative aspects here focused on attempting to elicit the participants’ views on the advantages (and disadvantages) of using social media, again showing similarities to the aims of this research and remaining suitable for enquiring about in interviews ([Obar et al., 2011](#)). Surveys and interviews were used alongside each other by [Pope et al. \(2009\)](#) in their attempt to create a marketing strategy for non-profit organisations, and a similar point as [Quinton and Fennemore \(2012\)](#) was mentioned: using these qualitative approaches provided a novel organisational perspective rather than the consumer experience that is normally examined. The level of focus on the organisations themselves, and the level of detail able to be extracted meant that interviews were a key method for obtaining the relevant data for this research. In order to make use of this data, interpretative qualitative methods were used to code and



then thematically analyse the resulting interview transcripts, which allowed the common themes discussed by the participants to be elicited.

#### 4.3.2.2 Structured Observations

To complement the qualitative data obtained from the interviews, an objective, unbiased view of how each charity used social media was desired in order to draw comparisons for RQ1. The interviews elicited the views of charity members as to how they *thought* their charity used social media, and so an alternative source was required—and other methods such as surveys that would have again relied on staff members stating how they believed social media was used were ruled out. A content analysis of social media sites could have been carried out with quantitative analysis used to count the occurrence of certain themes in the messages posted. This would have provided a detailed account of what type of messages each organisation sent on social media. However, rather than looking at the explicit content, it was decided that an overall summary of what features charities were using was more appropriate for validating the interview data. This could then determine whether or not aims such as attracting more donations were actually being acted upon by providing a facility to donate on the site. Previous studies by [Waters et al. \(2009\)](#) and [Waters and Lo \(2012\)](#) were examined when planning this approach, and while their methods are stated as being “content analysis”, their approach has similarities to a research method that has not yet extensively been adapted for studying the Web: structured observations.

Structured observations are a research method that emphasises the identification and recording of behaviour or actions. Comparable to a structured interview, this type of observation follows an “observation schedule” which is followed systematically to record actions ([Bryman, 2008](#), p. 257). Literature on its use for studying the Web appears limited, although some studies have begun to utilise it (such as [Weitzman et al. \(2011\)](#)) and because it focuses on recording behaviour that has actually happened there is potential for much wider adoption in this type of study. [Waters et al. \(2009\)](#) and [Waters and Lo \(2012\)](#) evaluated social media profiles in search of a pre-determined list of items (such as the charity’s mission statement, methods to donate and posting of campaign summaries), recording for each charity whether the “feature” was present. Due to the lack of actual analysis of the content (such as the themes or topics covered) as compared to what is implied by the phrase “content analysis”, it appeared that the method here was actually very similar to that of a structured observation. With a similar quantitative method required in this study, it was decided that this method would be adopted, as a structured observation.



#### 4.3.2.3 Survey

As discussed in Section 4.2, RQ2—which sought to assess why supporters interact with charities on social media—shared some similarities with the elicitation of aims for charities in RQ1. However, due to the larger population of supporters, a quantitative approach was selected for this question, and to fulfil this requirement a survey was chosen as the method to collect data. One of the biggest advantages of using this method in this case was that it does not rely on the supporter actually carrying out a visible action on social media. As explained in the literature review in Section 3.2 the number of supporters who do visibly interact (for example through commenting) is limited to a very small portion of any audience, and therefore this approach could instead gain the views of supporters regardless of their interactive behaviour. Had a social network analysis based technique been used for this then any findings would be skewed towards those who visibly engage with the organisation, and therefore directly assessing the views of supporters themselves was a valuable option. As with content analysis discussed above in the interviews section, Saxton and Waters (2014) also highlight methods of measuring public reaction to public relations marketing—with surveys being a prominent technique to assess its long-term effectiveness—as an area that has been lacking in providing understanding to the short-term reactions and engagement of social media marketing. The use of a survey in this case, however, was to elicit reasons behind why social media users—and charitable supporters—would want to connect to and engage with charities on these networks, rather than an attempt to measure a level of engagement in response to any particular campaign.

#### 4.3.2.4 Statistical Social Network Analysis

One of the primary areas in which analysing the Web, and social media in particular, is made interesting is that there is a gold-mine of data available to collect, analyse and study, which reflects how people are using and interacting with the services offered online. The study of Web Science naturally emphasises the study of this data, and to neglect this datasource in the case of this research would have meant ignoring a valuable source of insights that could potentially conflict with the opinions of both charity members and supporters alike. As such it was vital to capture some of this relevant data and to use statistical analysis to determine the extent to which certain phenomena occurred. Two primary aspects of social media usage were focused upon, as described below.

#### Communication Classification using Typological Analysis

Firstly, in order to show over a large sample how charities used social media, and to provide a comparable source of data to the interviews and observations, data that showed how charities themselves use social media to communicate was required. This could then be triangulated with the findings for RQ1 to investigate the relation between the charities'

intentions and their actual behaviour. In the literature review above, in Section 3.1, a number of classification schemes for social media use were discussed. The models proposed by [Tinati et al. \(2012\)](#) and [Li and Bernoff \(2008\)](#), for example, are suitable for categorising social media users based on their role in online communities, yet these are not targeted towards profiling the communicative role that an organisation may play in such communities. [Waters and Williams \(2011\)](#) have done some work in categorising use by governmental agencies in the USA, by sampling message content and assigning them to one of four models of public relations. However there was an opportunity in this research to use social media statistics to determine what types of communication each charity would facilitate through their own use of the sites, and compare this in the triangulation process to their stated intentions and aims that would be revealed from the interviews.

Based on the statistics gained, which reflected what types of message the charity sent, a typological analysis was chosen as the method to assign categories and develop a set of communication styles. [Hatch \(2002, p. 152\)](#) describes this as a method of analysis whereby it “starts by dividing the overall data set into categories or groups based on predetermined typologies.” The predetermined typologies may be based on existing theory, they may be common sense, or they may be based on the research objectives ([Hatch, 2002, p. 152](#)). As some contrasting types of communication are undoubtedly noticeable on social media—on Facebook and Twitter, for example, the processes of broadcasting new messages, replying to other messages, and re-sharing other messages all represent different styles of communication—these were used as initial categories to reflect different communication patterns (for example, a category to represent a communication strategy that is dominated by replying to other messages). Starting with these initial groups, cases were categorised based on which they most closely represented. From there, the data within each group could then be analysed to find themes and patterns which in turn led to the discovery of additional categories and sub-categories. Interestingly, this applied a qualitative method of analysis to quantitative data, favouring it over the quantitative methods such as K-means clustering algorithms that would have required the number of categories to specified in advance—while predefined categories were made in this case, the flexibility existed to create new groups where and when necessary based on the behavioural traits that emerged from the data.

### Conversation Chain Analysis

Secondly, statistics from social media sites were used to analyse the conversations that were present about the charities in question. Performing this analysis was necessary in order to measure and determine the level of interaction and response to charities’ posts, which would provide insights into whether their aims for social media—elicited from the other methods, such as the interviews—were showing any signs of success. This would allow the unique availability of data from social media to be used to either validate or

discredit the claims made by the charities, and is an important strand that takes this research further than simply asking for the opinions of the people involved to the point at which it can triangulate sources to provide further insights.

Conversations on social media reflect one of the key elements of ‘Web 2.0’ whereby anyone can create and comment on content. Section 3.1.1 discusses how conversations could indicate engagement and relationships on social media, pointing out that existing work such as [Tinati et al. \(2012\)](#) and [Boyd et al. \(2010\)](#) instead focuses on retweets and dissemination, rather than the two-way communication that the Web enables. As such, analysing the extensiveness of these conversations was carried out to provide insights into how this was occurring. This process was important for the final analysis section as it offered a dataset to the triangulation that could either support or contradict the views of the supporters (from the survey), as well as showing whether or not the charities’ ambitions for social media (elicited from the interviews) appeared to be succeeding. Furthermore a small sample of messages were subjected to content analysis in order to determine what was being discussed in certain cases, which introduced qualitative content analysis into this part of the research and provided more of an understanding around what types of content produced the most engagement.

## 4.4 Triangulation Application

As discussed above in Section 4.2 and depicted in Figure 4.1, triangulation was adopted as a means to integrate the various findings from each research method utilised. There was some flexibility in the design as it followed a dynamic approach that led to the structured observations being introduced as a complementary dataset alongside the interviews. As such, a small triangulation-based methodology was used to investigate RQ1 by itself, combining the data from the interviews with the complementary and comparable observational data. For RQ3, the two quantitative methods were kept separate, until the overall triangulation at the conclusion of this research, but in order to provide more understanding to the conversation chain analysis, there was the introduction of a qualitative approach to appreciate and understand *what* was being said, and therefore what induced the most engagement from supporters. A breakdown of methods that obtained quantitative and qualitative data is shown in Table 4.3, which also lists the associated conference presentations for each stage of work.

## 4.5 Final Methodological Remarks

This chapter has described the mixed methods, pragmatic and triangulation-based approach used for this research. It began by providing an overview of two major research

| Quantitative                | Qualitative                 | Publication/Presentation                |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Structured Observations     | Interviews                  | <a href="#">Phethean et al. (2013b)</a> |
| Survey                      | -                           | -                                       |
| Conversation Chain Analysis | Conversation Chain Analysis | <a href="#">Phethean et al. (2014)</a>  |
| Typological Analysis        | -                           | <a href="#">Phethean et al. (2013a)</a> |

Table 4.3: Research methods and data sources

paradigms—constructivism and empiricism—that were deemed unsuitable for this research as they would encourage the dominant use of either quantitative or qualitative methods. More flexibility was required in this case in order to elicit different aspects of social media value and to validate whether or not they were observable on social media. Consequently, the adaptability of pragmatism was ideal, and the opportunities afforded by mixed methods research were beneficial. The research design emphasised the use of a broad set of complementary methods that would use triangulation in order to produce detailed understanding of the area around social media marketing by charities.

Additional details about how each method was used, including the sample and data collection processes is provided at the start of each forthcoming chapter that provides a focused summary of each strand of this research. Following this, an overall analysis whereby each strand is brought together and triangulated is presented, which leads to the main contribution of this research. The next chapter will outline the pilot study that was carried out in advance of the main research, but was necessary in order to elicit many of the objectives.



## Chapter 5

# Pilot Study to Determine What Can be Measured on Social Media

“It is by doubting that we come to investigate, and by investigating that we recognize the truth.”

— Peter Abelard

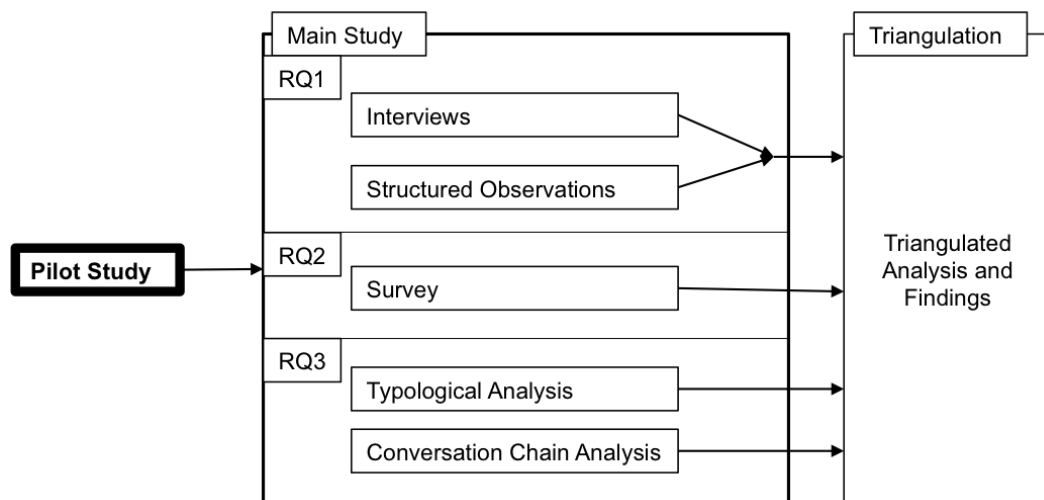


Figure 5.1: Pilot study placement within wider research design

This chapter provides details of the pilot study that was initiated as part of an MSc project and dissertation and then built upon in advance of the main phase of the research in this thesis<sup>1</sup> (Figure 5.1). Literature was summarised in order to produce a model of ‘stages’ of outcomes that are possible from an organisation such as a charity using social

<sup>1</sup>This work constituted a 3-month research project for the completion of an MSc in Web Science, which concluded the first of 4 years that make up the iPhD course in Web Science at the University of Southampton, and therefore immediately preceded the rest of the research outlined in this thesis. This work was developed further as part of the PhD, and was subsequently submitted to the 2012 Web Science conference.

| Model                                    | Awareness              | Engagement                    | Action              |
|--|------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| <a href="#">Vegh (2003)</a>              | Awareness/<br>Advocacy | Organisation/<br>Mobilisation | Action/<br>Reaction |
| <a href="#">Murdough (2009)</a>          | Reach                  | Discussions                   | Outcomes            |
| <a href="#">Hoffman and Fodor (2010)</a> | Awareness              | Brand<br>Engagement           | Word of Mouth       |

Table 5.1: Existing models of online ‘outcomes’

media. Once these stages were known, metrics were applied to each stage to assess what they are really measuring in terms of social media’s value or success for achieving results. Using this framework, two case studies were used as examples to see what insights could be achieved with regards to social media performance, which in turn raised questions that were taken forward for the main research questions used in this thesis. This work was presented at the 2012 Web Science Conference ([Phethean et al., 2012b](#)), and laid the groundwork for the subsequent research that was undertaken.

## 5.1 Awareness, Engagement and Action on Social Media

Throughout the literature, it was observed that many existing models and frameworks that have been suggested for analysing social media marketing can be mapped on to an overarching model that represents different ‘stages’ relating to the outcomes that may be achieved on social media. Three such models that were initially focused on were [Vegh \(2003, p. 72-75\)](#)’s classification of the forms of online activism, [Murdough \(2009\)](#)’s pillars of social media measurement and [Hoffman and Fodor \(2010\)](#)’s social media performance objectives. [Vegh \(2003\)](#) begins with awareness/advocacy representing the dissemination of digital information to increase public knowledge, building to calls for action in the organisation/mobilisation stage, and ultimately reaching the action/reaction stage where online action is carried out. [Murdough \(2009\)](#) again describes three stages: reach, referring to the amount of people talking about a brand; discussions, the tracking of topics and sentiment related to the organisation; and outcomes, such as increased site traffic. Finally [Hoffman and Fodor \(2010\)](#) cover awareness, the exposure of the brand; brand engagement, referring to the interactions of the audience with a brand; and word of mouth, a desirable objective relating to how messages spread online and indicates how engaged the audience is. Table 5.1 groups each stage in these three models together into three generic stages that are labelled ‘Awareness’, ‘Engagement’ and ‘Action’ to reflect the activities that the models appear to display.

Collecting and collating these different areas of measurement was the first step towards being able to understand how social media based marketing can be measured and assessed. Producing a framework of measurement such as this allowed different metrics

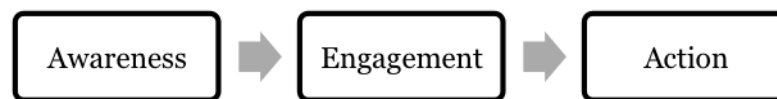


Figure 5.2: Stages elicited from relevant literature to measure in a marketing campaign

to be grouped together to determine what insights could be gained at each stage. Figure 5.2 displays the initial design of the Awareness-Engagement-Action (AEA) measurement model. Three stages were used to classify the different types of phenomena that can be measured in relation to social media marketing in order to determine success, based on the three existing models discussed above and summarised in Table 5.1. The first stage, ‘Awareness’ refers to the success of raising general awareness about a campaign or brand, which is comparable to accounting measures such as the number of new customers or followers, and reflects the ability of an organisation to get a message out to a particular audience size. Building on this, ‘Engagement’ then measures the extent to which interaction from the audience is elicited, which in turn indicates their level of support and commitment—taking into account their perception and satisfaction of the brand’s work. An alternative way of thinking of this stage is in the context of the previous stage: out of all the members of the audience who are aware of the campaign, how many are sufficiently engaged and interested in the brand to be noticed on social media? The final stage, ‘Action’ is then associated with the actual intended outcome of the campaign, and is difficult to measure from social media itself—data from online social networks can indicate whether someone is aware of or engaged with a campaign, but will rarely contain the relevant data to represent that they then went on to do something for the organisation as that action will very likely have happened offline.

### 5.1.1 Metrics Discovered

Building upon the AEA framework outline discussed above, this section now presents the initial selection of metrics for which each stage was measured. Table 5.2 displays those metrics that are suitable for measuring the ‘awareness’ stage, while Table 5.3 presents those that are targeted towards measuring ‘engagement’. As this was an early study, only these two stages were focused upon, and the ‘action’ stage was not as that would have required additional data to that which was obtainable directly from social media itself.



| Metric                          | Sources   | Variables  | Method  | Notes   |
|---------------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| <b>Audience Size</b>            | <a href="#">Sterne (2010)</a>   | Facebook - Number of friends;<br>Twitter - Number of followers   | Count number of friends/followers, recursively added for each friend/follower who reposts the message to imply the total potential audience.    | Implies the maximum potential audience, or “reach”, of a campaign.  |
| <b>Post Impressions</b>         | <a href="#">Orpen (2011)</a> ,<br><a href="#">Facebook Pages (2010)</a> | Facebook - Page Posts  | Count the total number of times that a post was displayed on a Fan’s news feed to imply the exposure of the post.                               | Quantifies the exposure of a post. This data is available to Page Admins, but unavailable to a third party.   |
| <b>Facebook ‘Fan’ Contagion</b> | <a href="#">Sun et al. (2009)</a>                                       | Facebook - Number of fans, Number of friends who also fan a page | Calculate the fan chain length for each ‘start node’ user that fans the page, based recursively on how many of their friends also fan the page. | Tracks a page through the network, indicating how many orders of influence it has (chain length). Shows how many of the users become aware of the campaign and are interested enough to become a fan. |

Table 5.2: Metrics to measure awareness on social media

| Metric                                | Sources  | Variables  | Method  | Notes   |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| <b>Post Interactions</b>              | <a href="#">Orpen (2011)</a>   | Facebook - Number of comments on post, Number of likes on post       | Count number of comments and likes that the post(s) received in a certain period of time.   | Indicates how many users registered some form of interest by commenting on or liking the post.  |
| <b>Retweets</b>                       | <a href="#">Kwak et al. (2010)</a>                                   | Twitter - Number of retweets   | Count the number of times that the post(s) were retweeted.  | Measures the number of Twitter followers engaged enough with the organisation to retweet a message.   |
| <b>Feedback Percentage</b>            | <a href="#">Orpen (2011)</a> , <a href="#">Facebook Pages (2010)</a> | Facebook - Post Impressions (as above), Post Interactions (as above) | Post Interactions / Post Impressions  | Calculates a ratio of interaction to sight, indicating the percentage of engaged users in the audience.   |
| <b>URL Diffusion: Influence Score</b> | <a href="#">Bakshy et al. (2011)</a>                                 | Twitter - Number of users who tweeted a link                         | Find posts containing a shortened URL and track the diffusion through the network.<br>Influence = number of users in the tree who post the same link. | Could be used as a measure of influence of a brand at spreading a link or message through Twitter by determining how many of their followers are engaged enough to re-post the same link. |

|  |  |   |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|---|
| <b>Conversation Index</b>                        | <a href="#">Solis (2011, p. 171-178)</a>                 | All Networks - Conversation keyword frequency                   | Audit conversations containing relevant keywords on social networks during a specified timeframe. Create baseline during uneventful period, compare with future examinations. | Measures the nature of conversations relating to a brand/company on social media sites, indicating the disposition of the engagement that is happening. |
| <b>Inter-arrival Times</b>                       | <a href="#">Perera et al. (2010)</a>                     | Twitter - Inter-arrival times of replies and retweets           | Measure inter-arrival times of replies and retweets by subtracting the times from each other.   | Can show co-ordinated behaviour that may indicate the engagement that an audience has with the campaign.  |
| <b>“Average Shared Links Click-Through Rate”</b> | <a href="#">Avinash Kaushik in Sterne (2010, p. 115)</a> | Any network using a shortened URL - number of clicks on the URL | Use URL shortening software to track the number of clicks on a link, and the origin of those clicks.  | Could show how many users are sufficiently engaged to follow a link sent by the charity.  |

Table 5.3: Metrics to measure engagement on social media

Based on the AEA model, and the review of metrics in the existing literature, a measurement framework for charitable marketing on social media was developed, which was subsequently presented at the Web Science Conference in June 2012 ([Phethean et al., 2012b](#)). The framework (Figure 5.3) was constructed using a selection of the identified metrics, with the purpose of being able to measure the Awareness and Engagement stages of charitable marketing campaigns. The focus at this point was on measuring Twitter

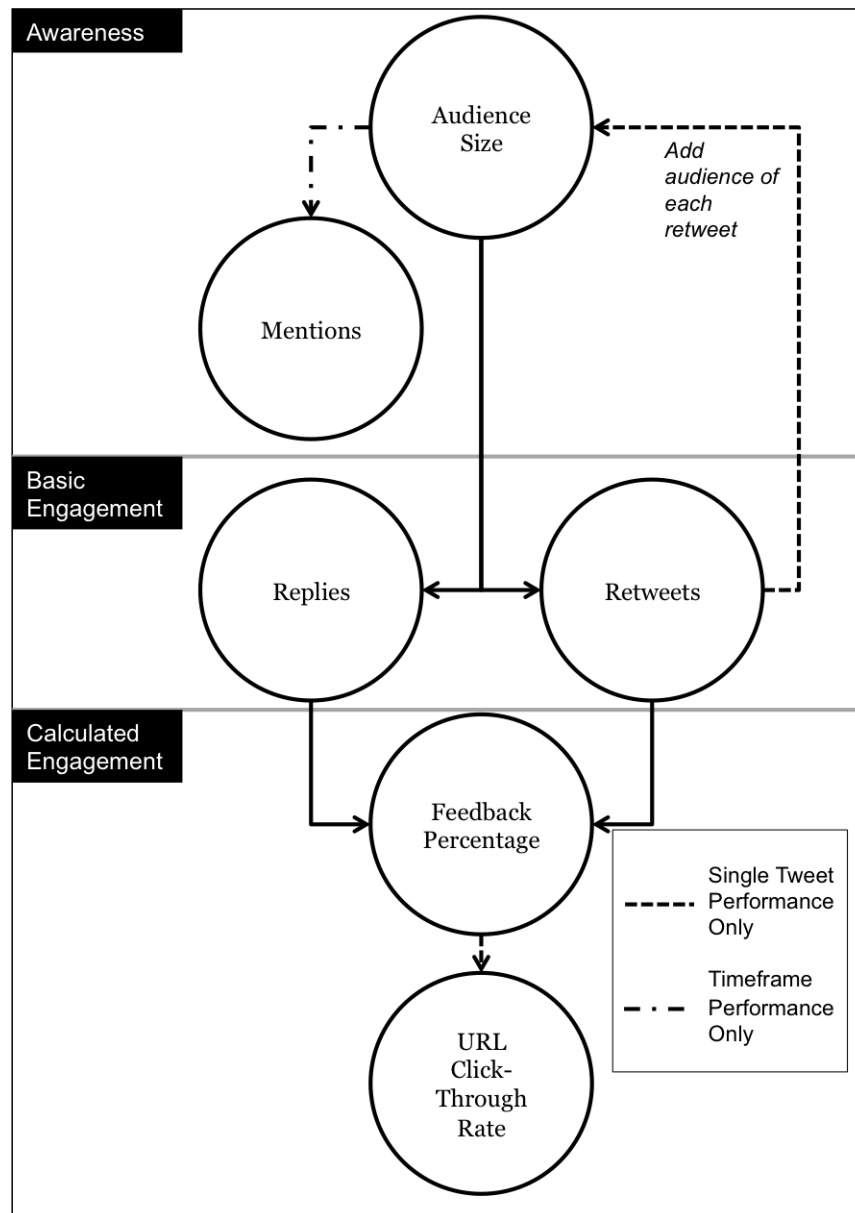


Figure 5.3: Initial framework of metrics for the AEA model

due to the ease of use of its Application Programming Interface (API<sup>2</sup>) for accessing relevant data, and therefore did not utilise all of the metrics above as some are more suited to other social networks (such as Sun et al. (2009)'s for Facebook). Twitter was also favoured as many of the Facebook-based metrics, such as post impressions would have required administrator privileges to access the required information from the associated Facebook page.

Additionally, it was noticed that performance could be measured in two ways: an individual message (tweet) that called for some sort of specific action could be examined to assess its effect; or alternatively performance could be assessed over a period of time,

<sup>2</sup>An API is a set of functions allowing a computer program to access the data on the provider's service.

taking into account all the messages that were sent in that period. The framework is split into layers that correlate with the stages of campaigns in the AEA model—the top level consists of awareness metrics, whereas the lower two levels concentrate on measuring engagement. The lowest level contains engagement metrics that require an additional calculation based on the simpler engagement metrics (retweets, replies), or the awareness metrics (or both). This selection of metrics focused on what data was immediately available from the Twitter API itself, although the URL click-through rate required the use of the Bitly<sup>3</sup> API.

## 5.2 Chosen Case Studies

As discussed earlier in the methodology chapter (section 4.3.1), two case studies were used to test the framework and assess what insights measurements such as these could provide to the area of charitable marketing on social media. The use of case studies meant that rather than attempting to generalise the findings of this pilot study to the entire population of charities on social media, two cases were chosen to be analysed, following the comparative design technique (Bryman, 2008, p. 57-58). These were chosen using purposive sampling, matching the comparative design trait of not seeking to generalise, but instead to intentionally select two particular cases. As discussed above, the framework was targeted towards measuring Twitter and so both cases were chosen for this network. Two charities active on Twitter—but in contrasting ways—were identified and chosen, and then a bespoke program was run to collect data regarding their activities and the responses to them on the site.

Following the purposive sampling method, a search was undertaken for active charities on Twitter. Two were identified that showed differences in terms of the scope of the charities, their sector, and most importantly, their use of Twitter. The Dogs Trust had previously been identified for “making excellent use of Twitter for promoting its cause”, which implies that studying it would obtain worthy data for this study (Charlton, 2009). Additionally, the Dogs Trust had also posted itself about how Twitter had—in the past—been credited with the re-homing of dogs<sup>4</sup>, indicating that this was a charity that believed they were receiving some tangible, ‘real’ action from the use of social media—thus making it an ideal candidate for this study. In contrast to the Dogs Trust, the second charity was chosen based on current events at the time that may have caused it to be particularly active on social media. In 2011, there was a hunger crisis in East Africa that many organisations were campaigning for in order to obtain the public’s help. This was seen as a topical issue that could be used to search for on Twitter in order to find a suitable charity, and the The World Food Programme (WFP) was identified. The WFP<sup>5</sup> is an

<sup>3</sup>Bitly (<http://bitly.com>) is a URL shortener and redirection service that allows the sharing and usage of URLs to be tracked.

<sup>4</sup><http://dogstrustblog.blogspot.com/2008/11/first-dog-rehoming-through-twitter-sees.html>

<sup>5</sup><http://www.wfp.org/>

|                              |          | Dogs Trust   | WFP  |
|------------------------------|----------|--|--|
| <b>Mission</b>               |          | “Help us give a happy home to thousands of stray and abandoned dogs” | “Fighting Hunger Worldwide”  |
| <b>Scope</b>                 |          | UK   | Worldwide  |
| <b>Funding</b>               |          | Publicly-funded through donations                                    | Voluntary contributions from governments, corporations and individuals |
| <b>Social Media Presence</b> | Twitter  | One main account plus other regional accounts                        | One main account plus many other departmental and regional accounts    |
|                              | Facebook | Standard fan page  | Branded fan page   |
|                              | Other    | YouTube, Flickr, Blog  | YouTube  |

Table 5.4: Summary of sample charities (as of July 2011)

international humanitarian agency run by the United Nations and was therefore chosen as it had been heavily involved with providing relief to the areas affected by the hunger crisis, publicising the problem, and encouraging support from the public. With the two organisations chosen being vastly contrasting in terms of size, scope and mission, comparisons between the cases would be able to be drawn (Table 5.4).

### 5.2.1 Sample Data

In order to collect data for the two case studies that would provide an initial test of the framework, a bespoke Java program was written that accessed the Twitter Search API every hour and requested the latest tweets containing the key phrases “dogstrust” and “WFP” (the two charities’ Twitter usernames). This ensured that all tweets from, about, and directed to or mentioning the charities were collected, along with retweets (reposting of tweets, prefixed by “RT @TwitterID”). A small dataset of forty-eight hours worth of tweets was collected—constricted mainly due to technical issues regarding the Twitter API rate limit at the time of the data collection. A total of 2149 tweets were collected, with 1363 referring to the WFP and the remaining 786 to the Dogs Trust. While ideally the sample would have been bigger, this was sufficient to test the framework metrics, and is summarised in Table 5.5.

A second set of data was also collected, to test the framework’s ability to measure the performance of an individual tweet (Table 5.6). Inspired by Bakshy et al. (2011)’s indication that tweets containing shortened URLs from the bitly service can be tracked to measure diffusion on the network, it was realised that this could be combined with the average shared links click-through rate metric described above (Sterne, 2010, p. 115)

|   | <b>Dogs Trust<br/>(@dogstrust)</b> | <b>WFP (@WFP)</b>          |
|---|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Number of tweets collected                | 786                                | 1363                       |
| Number of tweets from charity             | 132                                | 76                         |
| Number of tweets from audience            | 654                                | 1287                       |
| <i>Breakdown of tweets from charity</i>   |                                    |                            |
| New Tweets                                | 19                                 | 37                         |
| Replies                                   | 82                                 | 3                          |
| Retweets                                  | 31                                 | 36                         |
| <i>Breakdown of tweets from audience</i>  |                                    |                            |
| Mentions                                  | 143                                | 428                        |
| Replies                                   | 330                                | 40                         |
| Retweets                                  | 181                                | 819                        |
| Of charity                                | 36                                 | 246                        |
| Of others                                 | 145                                | 573                        |
| <i>Framework calculations</i>             |                                    |                            |
| Audience                                  | 28781                              | 188019                     |
| Mentions                                  | 143                                | 428                        |
| Retweets                                  | 36                                 | 246                        |
| Replies                                   | 330                                | 40                         |
| Feedback % (Post Interactions / Audience) | $(36+330)/28781 = 1.27\%$          | $(246+40)/188019 = 0.15\%$ |

Table 5.5: Summary of data for validating the AEA Framework.

to analyse the successful referral rate of a specific marketing message. For this data, a specific tweet ID was passed to the Twitter API for each charity (see Figures 5.4 and 5.5), and the relevant data for that post was then collected—including reply and retweet counts, as well as lists of user IDs who had performed these actions. The data collection program then accessed the bitly API, retrieving that data about the number of clicks on the shortened URL contained in the tweet. The main data that was focused on here was the “clicks”—the total number of clicks on the link, and on all other bitly links which point to the same long URL—and the “referrers”—which provided a list of each referring site or application and how many clicks it had generated on the link.

|                                      | Dogs Trust<br>(@dogstrust) | WFP (@WFP)               |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Followers                            | 28781                      | 188019                   |
| Retweets                             | 46                         | 89                       |
| <i>Bitly Data - as of 30/08/2011</i> |                            |                          |
| Total link clicks                    | 486                        | 3459                     |
| Link clicks (from Twitter)           | 70                         | 2407                     |
| <i>Framework calculations</i>        |                            |                          |
| Total Audience from Retweets         | 47585                      | 224099                   |
| Retweets                             | 46                         | 89                       |
| Replies                              | 0                          | 0                        |
| Feedback %                           | $(46+0)/47585 = 0.10\%$    | $(89+0)/224099 = 0.04\%$ |
| URL CTR                              | $70/407585 = 0.15\%$       | $2407/224099 = 1.07\%$   |

Table 5.6: Summary of data for validating the AEA Framework for an individual tweet.



Figure 5.4: Tweet from Dogs Trust using a Bitly link



Figure 5.5: Tweet from WFP using a Bitly link



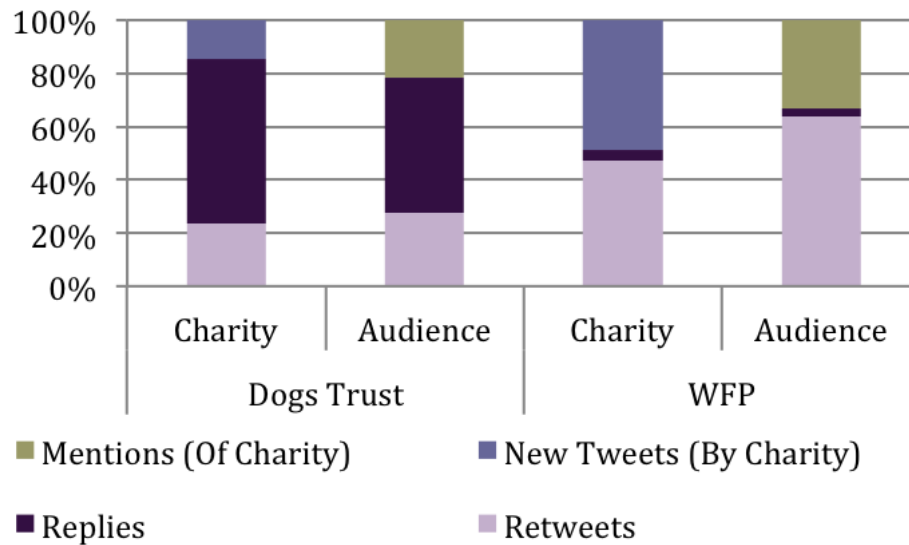


Figure 5.6: Breakdown of tweet types in the dataset

### 5.3 Analysis of the AEA (Awareness-Engagement-Action) Framework

Analysis of the data collected in Table 5.5 indicated that there was a discernable difference between the stages of awareness and engagement that was exposed by this measurement framework, and the underlying application of the AEA model. Breaking down the tweets from each organisation and their audience into the proportions of new tweets, replies, retweets and mentions, it was noticeable that—despite a much larger, international audience—the WFP was engaging significantly less through conversation (replies) with their audience than the Dogs Trust (Figure 5.6).

To further validate this point and support the framework’s findings, additional analysis was carried out on the times at which tweets were posted by both the organisations and their audiences. Tweets were separated into hourly slots, and the frequency in each hour was then plotted against the time to produce a time-series of when interaction of Twitter was occurring. The Dogs Trust graph (Figure 5.7) indicates that there is a cyclical trend which appears to show that the charity and the audience post after each other, suggesting a conversational nature to their relationship. Combined with the breakdown of tweets which shows a high number of replies for this charity, the argument that the Dogs Trust was succeeding in engaging with their audience was built. Conversely, there seems to be no such trend for the WFP and their audience (Figure 5.8), and combined with their tweet breakdown, there was the indication that their communication was far more unidirectional and of a broadcast style—which, given their high follower count, suggested success in the awareness stage. The WFP’s audience responded by retweeting these stories, but very rarely engaged through replying to enter in to a conversation with the charity - although as Figure 5.8 shows there was a higher level of constant ‘chatter’

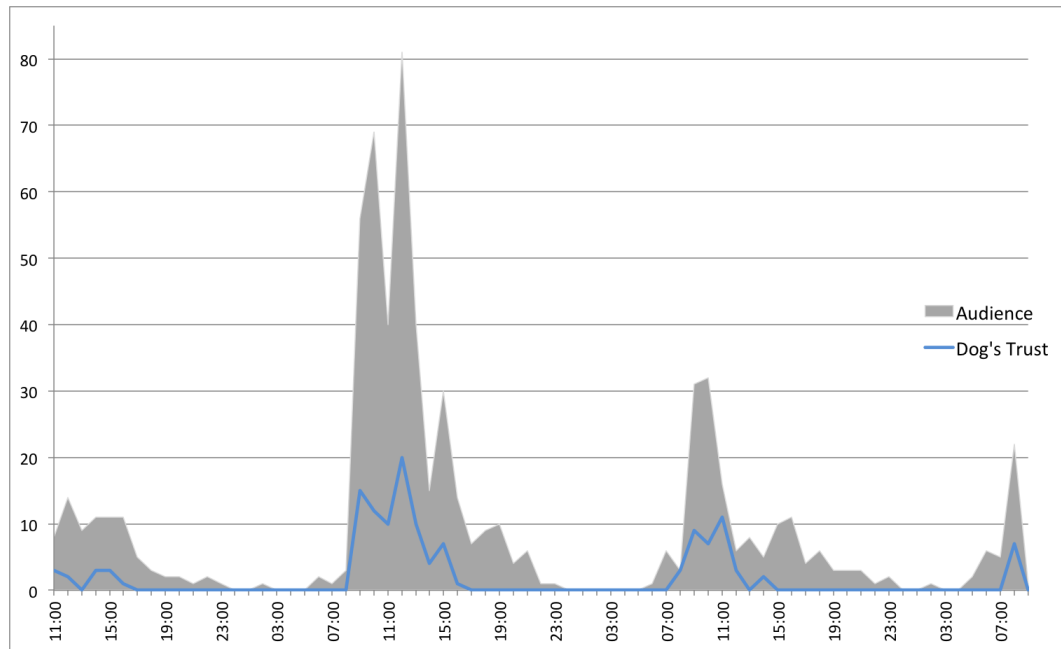


Figure 5.7: Time series of when and how frequently the Dogs Trust and their audience tweeted

from the audience. Comparing the feedback percentages for the two charities in this sample (1.2% for the Dogs Trust, 0.15% for WFP) however shows that this retweeting engagement was still to a much lower extent than the Dogs Trust (taking into account audience sizes) and supports this theory that the Dogs Trust were succeeding more in the Engagement stage—although the low value of both these numbers show how difficult it is to convert social media followers into engaged, interacting community members. This shows that the framework supports the argument that simply counting followers and their interactions is not sufficient to determine the levels of engagement, and that these values (such as those in the first three rows of Table 5.5) can be misleading. It is important to note at this point, however, that while the framework appeared to successfully distinguish awareness and engagement, it was not possible to determine which of these stages was more important for leading to the final stage of the AEA model—action—and it has been stated in previous literature that creating a high level of awareness can still be the cause of significant action (Rotman et al., 2011).

While the analysis of the first dataset indicated an increased level of engagement for the Dogs Trust, the second dataset about individual tweets containing referral URLs suggested differing results. Firstly, the calculations of the total audience size of each message shows that, while the WFP still reached far more people, the percentage increase in audience that the Dogs Trust received from users who retweeted the message is far greater (65% compared to 19% the WFP)—indicating the importance of engaged supporters spreading the word to subsequently generate greater awareness (Figure 5.9). This is reflected by a higher feedback percentage for this tweet than the example from the WFP—but again both values were remarkably small (Figure 5.10). The URL click

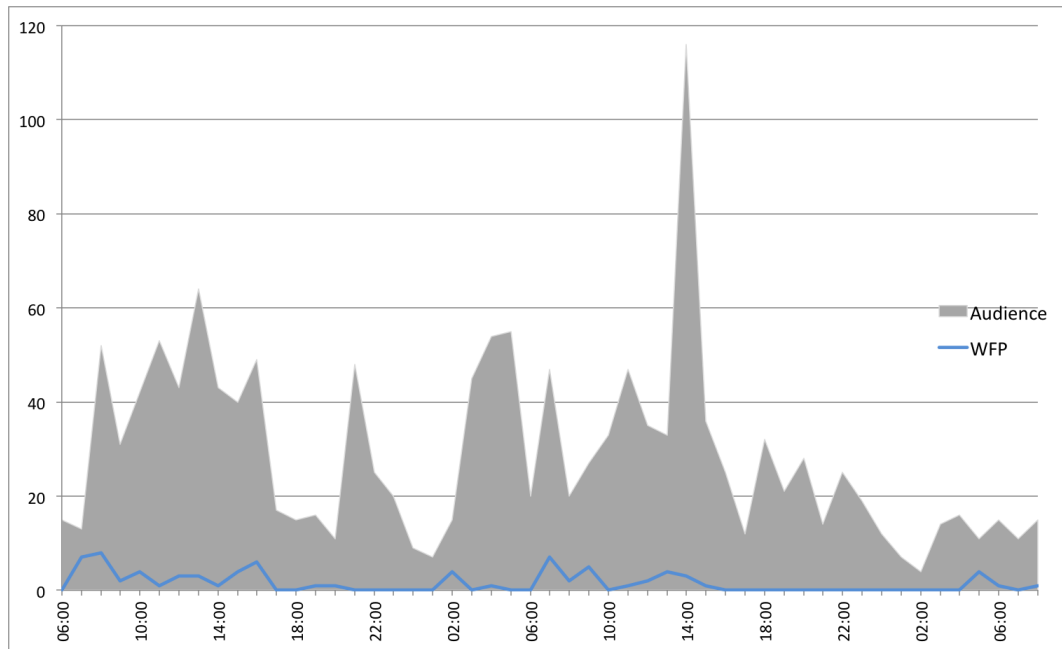


Figure 5.8: Time series of when and how frequently the WFP and their audience tweeted

through rate, however, revealed an interesting finding. The value for the WFP was much higher and would indicate that the audience of that charity is more engaged. From examining the sources of these clicks on bitly, it was noticed that the popularity and influence of retweeters played a huge part in the success measured by this metric. A retweet of the WFP tweet by Bill Gates led to over 200 clicks on the link—more than the entire number of clicks on the Dogs Trust’s link. This would support [Cha et al. \(2010\)](#)’s claim that targeting the most influential users on social media may be the best way to facilitate word of mouth marketing.

### 5.3.1 Discussion

The aim of this initial validation test was to determine the suitability and usefulness of the proposed framework for measuring charitable marketing performance on social media, and to assess the areas which remained unclear from using these types of measurements. For the intended aim of breaking the different outcomes of social media into the stages of awareness and engagement, following the AEA model, the framework appeared to succeed and provided a strong example of where one charity seemed to be successfully engaging in conversation with their audience, while the other appeared to be spreading awareness through the dissemination of information. The early findings were therefore encouraging in the search for methods of determining charitable marketing performance, which could in turn indicate value from social media. The analysis made possible by the combination and arrangement of metrics in the framework provides insights into the marketing performance that are missed if just the number of followers of a campaign are

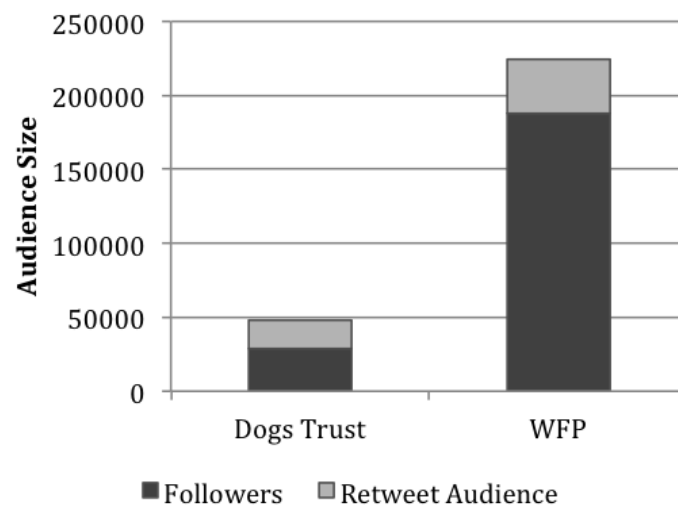


Figure 5.9: Total audience increase for each charity after a message was retweeted

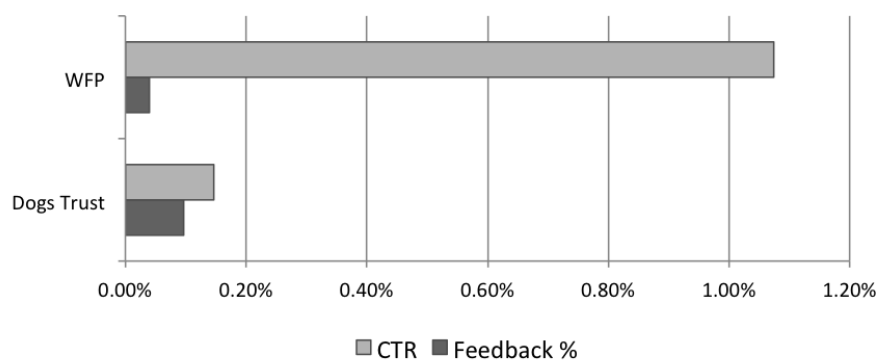


Figure 5.10: Individual tweet analysis

focused on for measurement, for example. The second dataset allowed the importance of community feedback on a message to be shown, by quantifying the extent to which the potential reach of the message increased because of engaged supporters who retweeted the message to their own followers. The URL click-through rate also provided a measure of quantifying the value of an influential follower to an organisation, by revealing how many clicks of a link that user generated—data which indicates that awareness and engagement aren't necessarily always generated by the charity itself, and that value can be created as much from the supporters and audience as it can directly from the charity.

Some uncertainties were present, however, in relation to the URL click-through metric. Determining which of the clicks originated from Twitter relied on the researcher's own interpretation of which sources were 'Twitter-based'. Applications such as TweetDeck, which integrate numerous social networks, were simply listed as a single entity, so this may have meant that more clicks were attributed to Twitter sources than were actually present in reality. Additionally, the findings relating to the influential user contribution

to this metric appeared to contradict those of [Bakshy et al. \(2011\)](#) that suggest marketers should not target the few users they believe will be influential, as the effect they create can only be observed with hindsight, and not predicted beforehand. However, [Cha et al. \(2010\)](#) suggests the opposite, and it would seem that if there is enough evidence beforehand to indicate that a particular user does generate a high number of referrals then they would be sensible users to target. The lack of clarity around points such as this supports [Ferguson \(2008\)](#)'s argument that current metrics used in social media are neither reliable nor dependable enough for measuring success—which has led some marketers to avoid the services completely. By including the metrics in a structured framework where associated measures can be used to support each other, the available measurement systems can begin to improve on this problem. What the results do suggest is that the two charities approached the use of Twitter in very different ways and this made up one of the key contributions of the AEA framework in [Phethean et al. \(2012b\)](#). Whereas the Dogs Trust appeared to favour conversation and engagement, the WFP appeared to prefer broadcasting messages to their audience. Given the variety in only these two cases, it was apparent that all measures would not be suitable for all charitable targets and strategies on social media. This therefore raised many of the motivations behind RQ1 for this research, as the aims of the charities clearly have some bearing on how they will adopt it and how that in turn will be engaged with by their audience. It also influenced the design of the work investigating communication styles, based on the observations in this pilot study that the proportions of new tweets, replies and retweets varied hugely between just these two charities.

The framework was evaluated as being generally appropriate for measuring social media despite this - it showed success in being able to distinguish the two stages of awareness and engagement and was able to provide measures for each of these. Taking into account the data examined up until this point from the two case studies, and as reading was carried out to further develop and refine the framework following this initial pilot study, there was an indication that the underlying AEA model required slight modifications in order to fully represent the process of outcomes that could result from social media. These were largely descriptive and so did not have any subsequent ramifications on the validity of the initial test. The final, revised, cyclical model is presented next.

## 5.4 Revised Cyclical AEA Model

As described earlier, many of the existing models and frameworks for analysing social media inspired the creation of the AEA model and the measurement framework discussed in this chapter. As more models were analysed, additional intermediary stages were required in order to accommodate the wide array of suggested approaches to measurement, with the significant addition of a stage from action to awareness, reflecting the fact that increased action for a charity will likely cause increased awareness. The steps from each

model and how they fit into the AEA model are shown in Table 5.7. The final stage, linking action to awareness is not displayed in the table as few existing studies used this as a step to analyse. However it was recognised from observing news stories on charitable work that when significant action occurs, a subsequent rise in awareness is caused. Investigation of this led to the finding of Bajpai and Jaiswal (2011)'s framework for analysing collective action on Twitter, which makes it apparent that post-action awareness creation goes further than expected, and actually occurs during action. Three elements of the collective action analysis framework fit with this: tactics (referring to information about the movement, or the opposition), information seeking (where users ask for details or clarification about the event), and reportage (personal accounts of what is occurring during the event) (Bajpai and Jaiswal, 2011). This turned the AEA model from a linear progression model in to a cyclical model, and allowed extra granularity in the positioning of some measures between the main AEA stages to reflect what they were really representing (Figure 5.11). A written summary of how the steps from each model in Table 5.7 fit into the AEA stages is presented in Appendix A.

|  | Awareness   | Awareness—<br>Engagement                         | Engagement  | Engagement—<br>Action                                   | Action and<br>Results          |
|--|---|--|---|---|--------------------------------|
| <a href="#">Sterne (2010)</a>            | “Getting their attention” (p. 15)   |  | Sentiment (“Get[ting] them to like you”) and interaction (“Get[ting] them to interact”) (p. 13) |   | “Convince them to buy” (p. 13) |
| <a href="#">Larson and Watson (2011)</a> | Awareness is the first step on the path to developing a loyal customer base |  | Persuasion as the next step wheer customers and organisation affect each others’ decisions      | Collaboration between stakeholders to support the cause |                                |
| <a href="#">Hoffman and Fodor (2010)</a> | Increase associations within a customer’s mind                              |  | “Brand engagement” and “word of mouth” as two primary objectives                                |   |                                |
| <a href="#">Cruz and Fill (2008)</a>     | Cognitive goals: awareness, reach and knowledge                             | Behavioural goals—page views and rate of sharing |   |   | Finacial goals                 |

|                                 |   |  |  |  |   |
|---------------------------------|---|--|--|--|---|
| <a href="#">Murdough (2009)</a> | A “pillar” of social media measurement—the quantity and quality of people talking about a brand |  | Second pillar of measurement - “discussions” - tracking the topics and sentiment related to the organisation | Third pillar—“outcomes”—referring to increased traffic and inclinations to act as a result of a campaign                 |   |
| <a href="#">Bennett (2007)</a>  | Perception of the organisation  | “Satisfaction” metrics relating to feelings and opinions |  | “Advertising effectiveness”—measures of expenditure (donations received), recall of advertisements and generation of WOM | “Accounting”—donor acquisition, retention and value                                 |
| <a href="#">Vegh (2003)</a>     | Awareness / Advocacy as first step of online activism (p. 72-74)                                |  | “Organisation / Mobilisation” - using the Internet for a call to action (p. 74-75)                           |  | “Action / Reaction”—‘hacktivist’ style activities as alternatives to offline action |

Table 5.7: Categorisation of existing models and frameworks into the cyclical AEA model



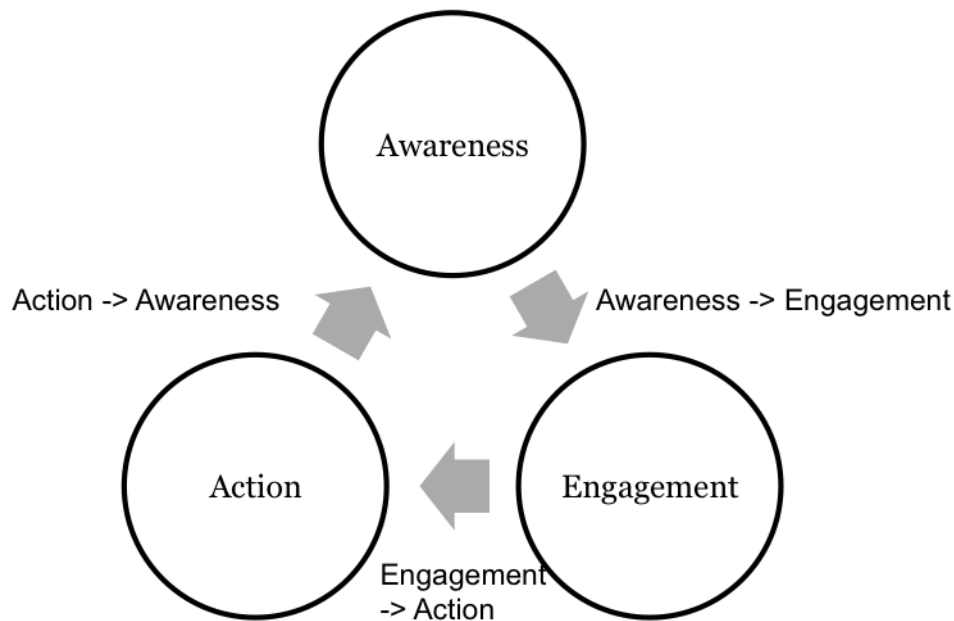


Figure 5.11: Revised stages for AEA framework including intermediate stages and cyclical structure

## 5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the first outputs of this research that occurred during the pilot stage. It has covered the development, testing and refinement of the AEA model. The model appears to succeed in distinguishing between the stages of awareness and engagement on social media—indicating that some measurement of performance is possible—but raises interesting questions around how social media is used in relation to the aims of the organisation. The development of this model, and the test carried out on the two case studies described above was presented at the 2012 Web Science conference (Phethean et al., 2012b). The model was subsequently used to categorise and classify further investigations into social media ‘value’, and provided an essential step in developing clearer understanding in this area. It also highlighted the need to separate these stages based on what aims the charities in question may have for social media—for example, are they seeking to increase their reach, or obtain greater engagement from supporters. It appears that the two cases studies examined here showed different approaches and this was evident from the breakdown of messages sent. Two factors subsequently helped to inform the main methodology: the motivation of the charity is often overlooked but would play a role in determining what content they sent, and whether or not certain responses could be labelled as ‘successful’ outcomes; and that charities use these sites differently depending on those motivations and an assessment of the communication styles adopted could help to contextualise any success measurements with regard to what the charity itself is doing. The next chapter addresses this first issue and seeks to improve understanding of why charities use social media in the first place, and how they go about doing so.

## Chapter 6

# Motivations Behind Charities Using Social Media

“Even if you fall on your face, you’re still moving forward.”

— Victor Kiam

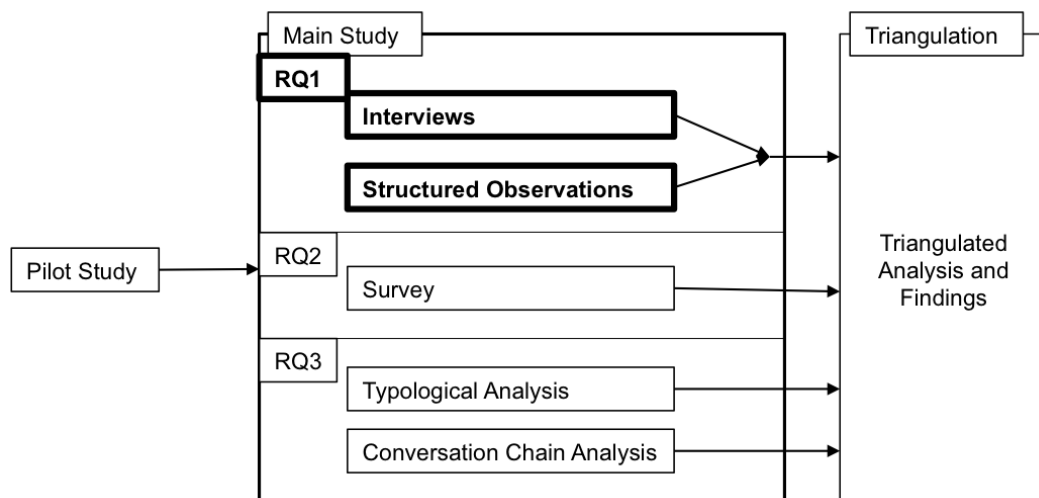


Figure 6.1: Chapter’s placement within wider research design

The previous chapter showed that the ways in which charities use social media services can vary greatly. The two charities studied exhibited contrasting approaches to managing their social media presence, indicating that the value of social media perceived by each of them is likely to be equally diverse. This also means that existing measurements that are used to analyse performance may not be taking into account the circumstances and desires of the organisation in question, which may therefore mean unsuitable metrics and measurements are used to provide an increasingly unclear picture of success. This chapter questions the tendency to use ‘one size fits all’ measurements for social

media usage and performance, and instead places emphasis on eliciting the underlying motivations and strategies for social media use by charities. As such the results from an investigation into how—and why—charities use social media services are discussed, which is vital for understanding what types of activity should be expected on the sites. Only by understanding these aims can suitable measurements ever be provided to the organisations who require them. Following the triangulation approach described in the methodology chapter above, this focuses on the convergence of the qualitative interviews and the structured observations of charities on social media (Figure 6.1). This was to combine observational data of how charities appeared to be using social media, with the views of charities themselves on why they were using the sites and what they wanted to achieve by doing so, with the results presented at the Web Science 2013 conference (Phethean et al., 2013b). Each set of data was collected separately and analysed individually, and so the analysis of each will be discussed first before an overall interpretation of their combined findings is produced later.

## 6.1 Sample and Data Collection

In order to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, it was necessary to gather it using separate approaches. For the qualitative interview data, charities were approached based on whether or not they were observed to have an active presence on social media. Of the approached charities, five agreed to allow a member of staff involved in the use of social media to participate in a semi-structured interview with the researcher that lasted between thirty minutes and an hour, for which thematic coding analysis was used to extract the key themes. As discussed in the Methodology chapter (Section 4.3.2.1), a number of previous studies such as Obar et al. (2011), Pope et al. (2009) and Quinton and Fennemore (2012) have used qualitative questions to explore social network use by charities. Examining these studies provided inspiration for designing the interview schedule for this study. While the interviews were semi-structured to allow deeper exploration of interesting points, an overarching schedule was created (Appendix D). The interview questions for this study revolved around eliciting why the charity was using social media, how the charity believed they were using social media, and whether they believed social media was worth anything to their organisation, so that the topics discussed would help in answering the proposed research question. In doing so the interviews incorporated the first five of Quinton and Fennemore (2012)'s themes, and integrated Obar et al. (2011)'s focus on the participants' opinions of performance and relative merits of using social media.

For the quantitative observational data, a Facebook dataset was provided by Headstream<sup>1</sup> that had been used to construct that year's (2012) 'Social Brands 100 report'<sup>2</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup>Headstream: <http://www.headstream.com/>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.socialbrands100.com/>

which examines the most dominant brands that had a social presence. While this contained organisations from all domains, there were nineteen organisations that fell in to the top one hundred that were from the charitable sector and three of these (Help for Heroes, Diabetes UK and the Woodland Trust) had also been charities that had been interviewed. For the remaining two interviewed charities, the Dogs Trust—which was studied in the pilot stage—was added to the dataset given their previous statements about social media having been beneficial in producing results for the organisation, and therefore provided an example of successfully engaging supporters in conversation, which could be used to compare other charities against. Finally, Jeans for Genes, the fundraising section of a larger genetic disorder charity, which had agreed to be interviewed, was also added as it offered an intriguing context based on a single date in the calendar around which the majority of their fundraising occurs. For these two organisations, data from Facebook was collected using the Facebook FQL language to cover the same period as the Headstream dataset (February 2012). For Twitter, a week’s worth of data was collected for all twenty-one charities using the NodeXL<sup>3</sup> template for Microsoft Excel.

Following the methodological decision to utilise structured observations in Section 4.3.2.2, an observation schedule was developed based upon the themes of categorisations from previous studies. Waters et al. (2009) came up with three categories of items on social media to record that represented: organisational disclosure (providing details of the organisation and their mission), information dissemination (posting information), and involvement (e.g. methods to donate or opportunities to volunteer). Breaking down and recording these types of behaviour could be used to provide insights into RQ1 and the analysis of how charities use social media. In the development of the 3-M Framework, Gallaughier and Ransbotham (2010) classified interactions on social media as either Megaphone (firm-to-customer), Magnet (customer-to-firm) or Monitor (observable customer-to-customer), while Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) classified tweets as either information spreading, community building or promoting action. This revealed certain trends in the categories that were being used: spreading information (megaphone), and engaging customers to cause them to become more involved with the charity, which the observation schedule was based upon (Appendix B).

In summary a total of twenty-one charities were used in this study, all of which were used in the structured observation, and five of which were interviewed and processed using thematic analysis.

## 6.2 Structured Observations

The observation schedule depicted in Appendix B was followed for each of the twenty-one charities, recording the observed behaviour in terms of the features used on both

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<sup>3</sup>NoedXL: <http://nodexl.codeplex.com/> NodeXL is a network analysis and visualisation add-on for Excel that allows the collection of social media data.

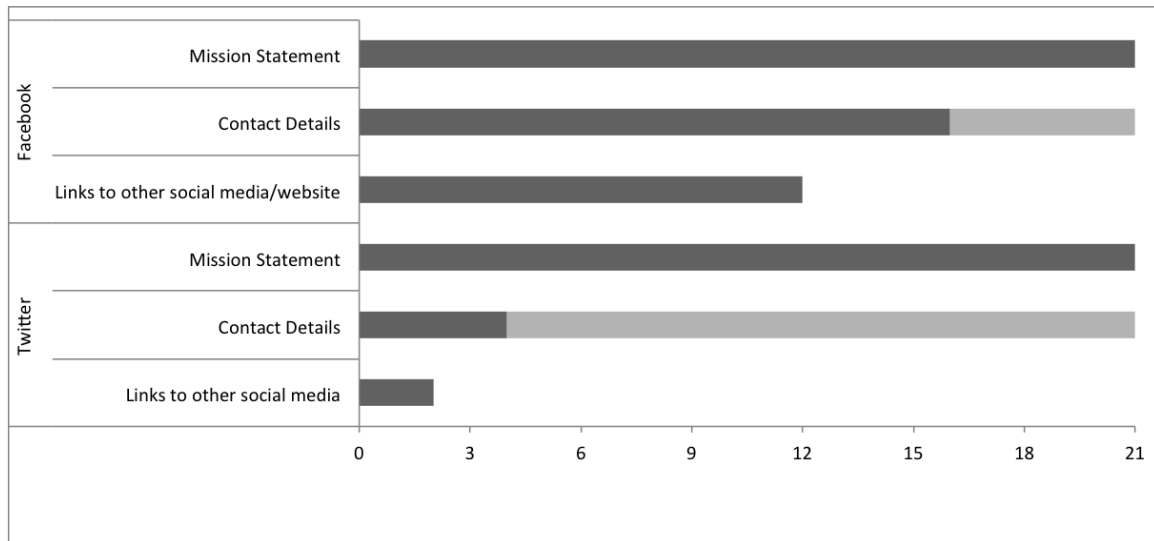


Figure 6.2: Charitable use of social media for organisation disclosure (Lighter grey bars indicate this feature was used but to a lesser extent)

Facebook and Twitter. The results for the organisational disclosure section are shown in Figure 6.2. All the charities used both networks to disclose their mission (21/21 for each of Twitter and Facebook). Many charities also provided contact details for supporters to find their website, and in some cases—more so on Facebook—telephone numbers and addresses were disclosed. While these previous two features were used frequently, the final organisational disclosure feature was used a lot less—linking to other social media sites. On Facebook, 12/21 charities provided a link to some other social network page, but on Twitter this was just 2/21. This could indicate a less than coherent overall social media strategy, with each network instead used for a single, standalone purpose. What this observation does not reveal, however, is whether or not links were contained within the charities' posts on the sites themselves.

Focusing on the use of Facebook, Figure 6.3 displays the frequency by which the charities utilised particular features. Perhaps most noticeable from this chart is that the use of facilities for generating a financial return is low—only 6/21 has a mechanism for donating through their Facebook page and 5/21 had a Facebook store<sup>4</sup>. This indicates that the pages were not being used to generate income, and that the priorities for use were different—or at least that this aim was not being facilitated through current use. Additionally, the other feature listed relating to the 'action' stage in the AEA model, providing volunteer opportunities, was rarely used (4/21 charities), which suggests that Facebook was being used more for engagement building and spreading awareness instead. This is supported by 19/21 charities allowing users to make posts on their page, revealing a general willingness for users to contribute content and to develop the community. Only around half of the charities (10/21) regularly interacted on these posts, however,

<sup>4</sup> A store is a tab on a Facebook page that allows the user to browse the owner's inventory of products and make purchases

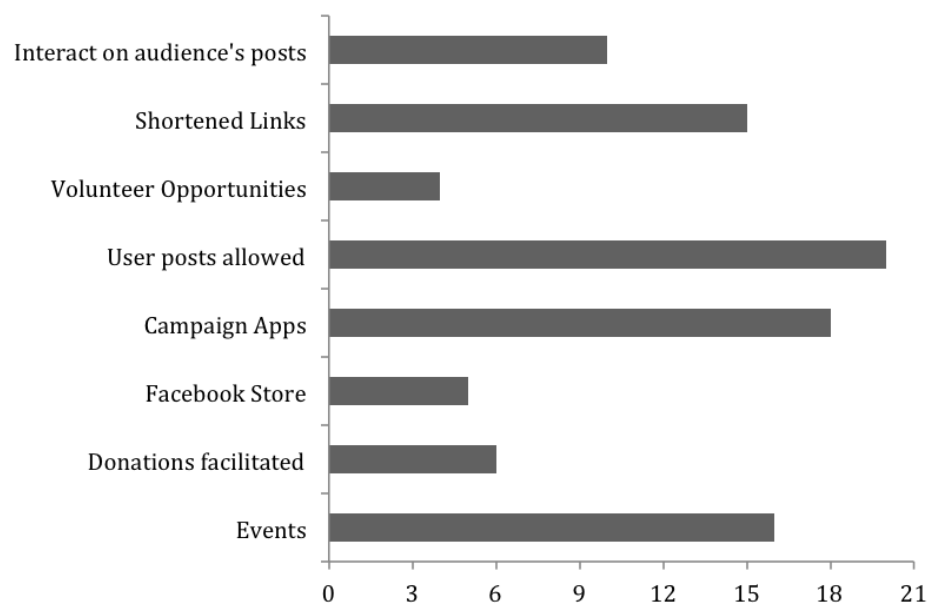


Figure 6.3: Charitable use of features on Facebook profiles

indicating that they were not monitoring the conversations that were happening around them, and therefore may not be utilising the potential to develop relationships by engaging with their interacting supporters. Campaign Apps, which are applications for the Facebook platform and placed on a brand's page were used by 18/21 charities, and help to provide a unique experience to foster engagement, while shortened links were used by 15/21 charities—these allow the organisation to track how people click on them and travel to other content on the Web, which may indicate the effectiveness of their messages to refer people to another relevant website.

Analysis of the types of post made by charities on Facebook also revealed interesting findings. Figure 6.4 shows the frequency distributions of different types of content included within posts. The most popular type of content shared in the charities' posts was links to a blog or other internally-run website (a website run by the charity). The distribution of this feature follows a normal distribution and indicates that the use of it varies, however. For the other types of content in posts displayed in Figure 6.4, there is a trend of positive skews around low medians, suggesting that it is common for each of these to be used infrequently, with occasional higher levels of use recorded. Linking to an online store (either Facebook-based, or a charity's online shop) was seldom observed, revealing that the use of revenue-generating features was either not a priority for charities, or was not being utilised. Links to specific campaigns, and messages containing a specific call for action—the two categories that represent attempts to mobilise supporters—both show positive skews which suggest that Facebook may have been used to ask supporters for help, but that this was an occasional use rather than a dedicated strategy.

Alternatively, Figure 6.5 shows the distribution of how frequently photos and videos were

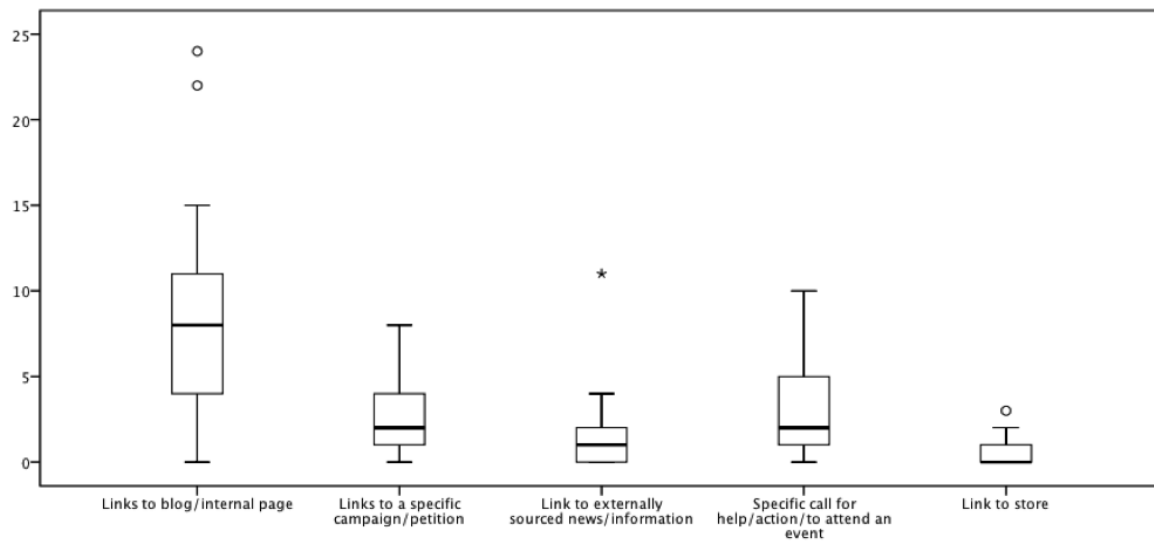


Figure 6.4: Types of post content created by charities on Facebook

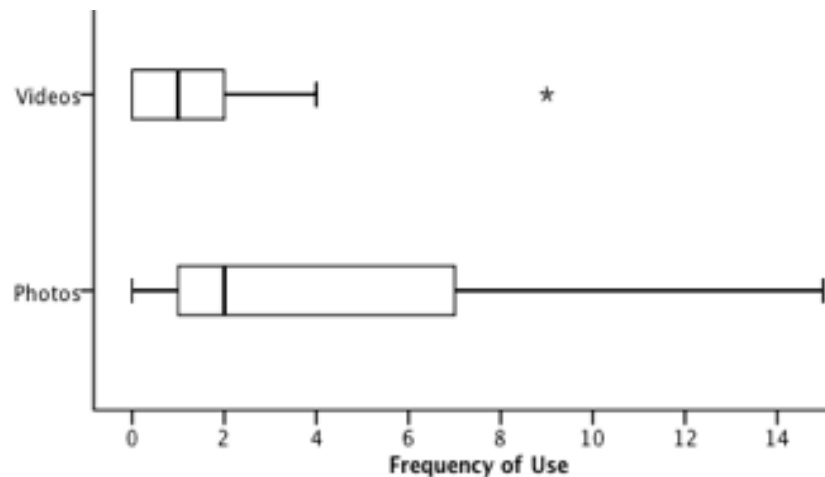


Figure 6.5: Use of multimedia content in Facebook posts

posted by the charities. The use of photos showed a large variation, positively skewed around a median of 2 photos per week. This indicates that generally photos are posted infrequently, although some charities do post them as much as once per day, and in some cases, twice. For video use, there was far lower use observed, apart from one outlying case where there was frequent posting of video content. This suggests that the use of media was not a dominant strategy, although some organisations were making their posts visual by including pictures regularly.

### 6.2.1 Observation Summary

The structured observation revealed a number of interesting findings. Organisations appeared to use both Facebook and Twitter a lot for organisational disclosure—promoting

| Finding | Summary  |
|---------|--|
| SO1     | Strong use of organisational disclosure on Facebook and Twitter                    |
| SO2     | Low use of Facebook for financial returns  |
| SO3     | Low use of Facebook for volunteering opportunities                                 |
| SO4     | User content generally encouraged, but less interaction from the charity in return |
| SO5     | Unique campaign apps popular on Facebook   |
| SO6     | Shortened links to produce trackable referral traffic popular on Facebook          |
| SO7     | Links to blogs/internal pages the most popular type of post                        |
| SO8     | Varied use on Facebook for mobilisation  |
| SO9     | Varied use of photo sharing on Facebook  |
| SO10    | Low use of videos on Facebook  |

Table 6.1: Summary of quantitative structured observation findings

the details of their organisation and providing contact details. For Facebook, a number of other findings were observed. There was low use of features that could produce financial returns, and likewise for posts offering opportunities to volunteer. This could indicate a strategy for the network that prioritised maximising awareness and engagement, rather than action. However, while user content was generally encouraged by most charities, there was less evidence of the charity responding to this, which may suggest that awareness is valued more than engagement. Campaign apps—providing a unique experience on the Facebook page—were popular, as were shortened links to increase trackable referrals—indeed links in general to other pages were the most popular type of post. This again suggests the use of social media as a mechanism for getting people’s attention, before driving them to the organisation’s own dedicated site. For other types of post, such as those attempting to mobilise supporters, or those containing media elements, use was varied. These results are summarised in Table 6.1, and will be used to triangulate with the interview data later in this chapter. A complete overview of the quantitative data collected is displayed in Appendix C.

### 6.3 Interviews

Five semi-structured interviews were held with members of the charities discussed earlier in Section 6.1, following the interview schedule presented in Appendix D. The aim of these interviews was to elicit from the employees the reasons and motivations behind why their charity utilised social media. Thematic analysis was used to first code and then



categorise themes in the responses from the five interviewees, and this in turn revealed insights into what value the charities themselves perceived to be in social media. In order to achieve this, a thematic codebook was produced. This was developed iteratively throughout the coding process; the final version of which is shown in Appendix E. Key quotes and summaries of these themes are presented below, and the list of charities that the interviewees represented can be found in Appendix F.

### 6.3.1 Motivations for Using Social Media

To begin the analysis, the phrases that interviewees used when explaining why their charity had adopted—or why it was currently using—social media were examined. The overarching theme here was that charities want to provide opportunities for their supporters and online audiences to engage with the organisation:

*“We went into social media with intension of engaging and for education, messaging, not necessarily overtly for fundraising.” (Interviewee 1)*

*“Rather than just being a marketing tool it’s about developing our personality.” (Interviewee 2)*

*“At the moment our goal for social media is just engagement and developing conversations basically, and raising awareness of different projects we’re working on.” (Interviewee 5)*

These example responses show a strong inclination towards using social media for developing engagement and establishing a recognisable brand presence online. There was also the suggestion that generating awareness was also important, whether through defining their personality, educating the public or promoting their campaigns. Further into the interviews, however, it emerged that these aims varied depending on which social media service was being used. It appeared that Facebook was the most favoured service for carrying out relationship building:

*“The Facebook one is very much about providing support and advice for people, and creating a place where people can get that from either us as experts on the subject, or from each other as people who kind of live through that experience themselves.” (Interviewee 3)*

*“It’s a bit more about the people who take part, the supporters, people who’ve maybe been affected by genetic disorders ... who care about where the money goes a bit more.” (Interviewee 4)*

*“I think that kind of public involvement—citizen science we call it a lot ... encouraging the public to get involved more with nature helps people understand why the preservation of it is so much more important.” (Interviewee 5)*

Facebook was also seen as a platform through which charities could generate support for particular campaigns, as well as to sell products in order to generate income:

*“Probably [the] most popular type of post on Facebook is a re-homing appeal.” (Interviewee 1)*

*“It can be used to promote our grooming products or our catalogue.” (Interviewee 1)*

*“We have recently introduced discounts for our Facebook supporters for the shop.” (Interviewee 2)*

*“Something we would like to look at is a donate button on Facebook, or a Facebook kind of shop, potentially.” (Interviewee 5)*

However, in general, attracting income through social media was not seen as a priority. Typically, fundraising was either not deemed to be successful, or classified as a positive side-effect of performing well in the relationship building work that the charities were carrying out and focusing on:

*“As a charity, we rely completely on donations and we’ve not really found a successful way of driving donations through social media yet.” (Interviewee 5)*

*“We’ve done a little bit more of it year on year and sort of most of it has been almost incidental fundraising.” (Interviewee 1)*

In contrast, Twitter was seen as a more suited towards generating awareness through referral traffic, rather than attempting to provide direct support or to engage in conversation:

*“Twitter is very much trying to drive traffic back to the website, so Facebook we try and keep maintained conversations on Facebook itself.” (Interviewee 5)*

*“On Twitter for example one of our most popular tweets ever was a very simple tweet about what to do if you see a dog in a hot car.” (Interviewee 1)*

*“Twitter—there’s an element of support and advice but a lot more around kind of awareness of what we’re doing, and ... our awareness campaigns seems to work, gets a better response, through Twitter.” (Interviewee 3)*

*“Something like Twitter—we’d probably measure the effectiveness of that probably more through Google Analytics and how much more traffic it’s referring back to our main website.” (Interviewee 5)*

### 6.3.2 How Social Media's Value is Tracked and Perceived

While there were some discernable trends in the overall aims of social media discussed above, there was far more variation in what value the interviewees perceived to be created by using social media. Some participants were quick to highlight the trouble of attempting to track online activity on social media through to meaningful offline action for the charity:

*“Interestingly, some of the ones [appeals] that go absolutely crazy on Facebook don’t get any requests at the centre, so I’ve not yet been able to find an actual trend.” (Interviewee 1)*

*“It’s fine getting lots of sign-ups but they don’t mean anything to you if they don’t convert into donations.” (Interviewee 4)*

This negativity towards measurement and determination of performance is summed up by one charity as:

*“Social media is just like—it creates ‘talk-ability’, it creates buzz, it creates excitement, it’s just an add-on really.” (Interviewee 4)*

While this charity was noticeably more cautious about the benefits of social media, and keen to stress that it hadn’t yet reached vital importance, other interviewees were appreciating greater returns from social media through more dedicated use. While the value that they discuss is difficult to tangibly measure and observe, the anecdotal accounts that they provide show that they truly believe social media produces a positive effect for their organisation:

*“I think social media represents a pretty unique opportunity for really immediate personal engagement—I think it’s really difficult to get in another channel.” (Interviewee 5)*

*“Posts where we’ll just say here’s a photo ... stuff like that, that’ll do sort of 10 times the number of likes and shares than an actual post about what we do as an organisation.” (Interviewee 5)*

*“Having an image or something that people can look at or watch definitely, we can see a definite increase in terms of how many people that reaches and how many people kind of engage or interact with that post.” (Interviewee 3)*

*“People have gone on to do things that we didn’t ask them to do ... and then they sort of egg each other on for bigger and bigger things.” (Interviewee 1)*

*“Now it’s actually text-only updates with no links, no images that get the best audience.” (Interviewee 1)*

It is interesting to see at this point that posts containing pictures appeared to be noticeably more successful in terms of engagement for some of the charities questioned, which

provides insights to a deeper level regarding the value of social media and how it is not necessarily consistent for all uses. One of the interviewees also mentioned that their charity had begun to attempt to measure the financial value of what they were doing on social media. This occurred through tracking supporters who follow links to their main website, although the interviewee later admitted that the financial return that they were trying to measure was not their priority:

*“We have recently started looking at metrics as to the actual cash value of traffic referring from all social channels back to the website.” (Interviewee 5)*

*“That’s definitely still a secondary priority to actually the main levels of engagement and involvement ... but it is a useful tool for people that are still unconvinced if you like by social media.” (Interviewee 5)*

### 6.3.3 Social Media’s Role Within a Wider Marketing Strategy

It must also be recognised at this point that social media is still a relatively new set of tools and features in the arsenal of marketing facilities an organisation possesses. While it remains in its infancy, charities are not able to fully rely on it and consequently traditional forms of marketing were still popular with the interviewees, indicating a need to merge and integrate all of these services into a coherent marketing strategy:

*“I think the one that we would really, really miss, is email.” (Interviewee 1)*

*“We rely a lot on face-to-face and that sort of thing as well, so, I think that’s still definitely the strongest way for us to build relationships.” (Interviewee 2)*

This summarises an important theme that social media shouldn’t be viewed as an independent, standalone marketing strategy, but part of an integrated plan that as a whole is best suited to the needs of the organisation. It is clear that the value of social media is not enough to completely replace previous marketing activities, although it does provide unique opportunities to complement these strategies with new techniques. However it must also be recognised that social media does now help to meet the modern expectations around how people want to interact, and so existing marketing strategies must also successfully integrate social media in order to succeed:

*“It’s the way we’re used to operating and we’ve grown used to the speed and expectations of the speed of reply.” (Interviewee 2)*

*“There’s a lot of people who ... would shy away from us for asking for support and advice but if they can do it in ... social media that maybe feels slightly anonymised, even if it’s not, it’s not ... [as] committed as making a phone call to someone to ask for advice ... it’s a very quick and easy way and the mobile element I think is quite a key thing for us.” (Interviewee 3)*

| Finding | Summary  |
|---------|--|
| I1      | Social media used primarily for engaging and developing relationships and awareness                    |
| I2      | Facebook used for relationship building and public involvement   |
| I3      | Facebook used to generate support and some income  |
| I4      | Social media fundraising not a priority  |
| I5      | Twitter used for generating awareness  |
| I6      | Twitter used for driving referral traffic to website   |
| I7      | Difficult to track online activity through to offline action   |
| I8      | General perception that social media produces some positive value, but unable to measure this tangibly |

Table 6.2: Summary of qualitative interview findings

*”[E]ven via a website you can post content but to get the interactivity and the involvement from people, I think that’s what creates the level of engagement and I think social media is pretty unique in the way it presents the opportunity.” (Interviewee 5)*

#### 6.3.4 Summary of Themes Elicited From Interview Analysis

The interviews enabled rich, in-depth qualitative data to be gathered regarding how charities use and perceive social media. The thematic analysis method chosen to analyse this data enabled a number of themes to be discovered based on a qualitative assessment of the interview transcripts. Interestingly, the charities spoken to described a number of aims that they had for social media, ranging from developing relationships and building awareness to generating referral traffic, but did not appear to focus on fundraising or generating income as a priority. The views on how each of Facebook and Twitter could be—and were—utilised showed that the differences in what these networks afford has had some effect on how they are targeted by charities, and indicates that ‘social media’ should not be approached, or measured, in any one singular way—each network is unique and could be used to produce different results. In terms of the measurement and analysis that is currently carried out by charities, it is clear that this is a difficult task that they face, and while there is an overall feeling that using social media produces some positive value, they are unable to measure it exactly. To summarise the qualitative interview findings, a list of the most prominent themes and findings are displayed in Table 6.2, which will be used in conjunction with the quantitative data discussed above for triangulation.

## 6.4 Triangulation of Structured Observation and Interview Findings

The quantitative and qualitative data and analyses were brought together in order to compare and contrast the findings that they provided. Combining the main findings from Tables 6.1 and 6.2, four areas of triangulation occurred that represent the areas in which each dataset provided similar insights, and these are summarised in Table 6.3.

Firstly, by examining the trend between findings SO2, I3 and I4, a theory can be developed regarding the use of social media for fundraising and revenue generating purposes. SO2 states that Facebook was rarely used for generating financial returns, and this would appear to support I4 from the interviews that found social media fundraising was not a priority for the sampled charities. I3 relates to the fact that some charities did gain some income from their Facebook presence, and there was a willingness from some of the interviewees to develop these features further in the future, but it is clear that at this point it appears fundraising is not a social media priority for charities.

I3 also relates to the finding that there was some evidence of charities using Facebook to increase support and encourage users to carry out some sort of action for the charity. This contrasts slightly to SO3 which found little use of Facebook as a platform for promoting volunteering opportunities, but it is possible that the charities were carrying this out in a way that was not recorded by the observation schedule. Additionally, SO8 found varied use of mobilisation calls in general on Facebook, which could indicate that the use of these type of message was different across the sample. The smaller interview sample may have only portrayed a particular part of this story. However, it can be seen from this combination that mobilisation of supporters is an aim for social media, and success in this could create positive value.

Perhaps the strongest indication of the main aim for social media is found in I2 which states that Facebook is used primarily for relationship building and enticing public involvement. This was a general theme that was discussed as a desirable outcome for social media overall. SO4 found that on Facebook, user content was generally encouraged on charity pages (users were not blocked from posting on the pages), although at times there were few responses to these posts from the charities themselves. However the findings of SO1 (frequent organisational disclosure), SO5 (campaign apps used on Facebook) and SO9 (varied use of photo sharing) all indicate a willingness from the charities to build a presence on social media that can establish a relationship, develop trust, and increase familiarity with their supporters. It is this work—to provide an effective channel for spreading awareness and generating engagement—that appeared to be most popular for charities on social media, and can be seen as a primary aim that should be assessed.

The final overarching theme discovered from triangulating the observations and the interviews relates to SO6, SO7 and I6. It was found from the observation of Facebook

| Triangulated Finding | Findings<br>(SO-Structured Observation, I-Interview) | Summary   |
|----------------------|--|---|
| 1                    | SO2, I3, I4  | Fundraising is not a social media priority for charities at this time.  |
| 2                    | SO3, SO8, I3   | Charities aim to some extent to mobilise supporters using social media.   |
| 3                    | SO1, SO4, SO5, SO9, I2                               | Social media is an effective channel for spreading awareness and generating engagement, which helps to build relationships with supporters. |
| 4                    | SO6, SO7, I6   | Social media is important for generating referral traffic, especially from Twitter.   |

Table 6.3: Summary of triangulated interview findings

profiles that links to blogs and other internal webpages of the organisation were the most popular type of content in posts by the sampled charities, indicating a desire to generate referral traffic from social media. Additionally, shortened links were seen to be popular, which provides a mechanism for tracking the performance of this outcome. The interviews supported the observational findings, but typically viewed Twitter as the main force for driving referral traffic. This indicates that as an overall aim for social media, referral traffic is commonly sought, and can be achieved on either of these two platforms. While Twitter is seen as the main avenue for this, it is reasonable to assume that it does not mean it shouldn't be forgotten on other platforms such as Facebook, and the observations revealed that this did appear to be happening.

## 6.5 Conclusion

The findings summarised above in Table 6.3 suggest that performance and success on social media is not necessarily tied to an organisation's ability to fundraise on these platforms, and a more complex variety of aims are present, which need to be considered in order to understand the value of social media in general, as discussed in Phethean et al. (2013b). The four main themes elicited from the triangulation of observation and interview data suggest four various aims or strategies that require focus:

### Relationship Building

Forming and developing relationships with supporters appeared to be the priority for charities, and this was evident from both the interviews and the structured observations. Strengthening the connections with existing supporters suggests a

requirement for interactive, two-way conversations on social media, which could reflect the bonds between charity and supporter-base and reflect the engagement of their social presence. This primarily reflects the ‘engagement’ stage of the AEA model, but also relies heavily on generating awareness, while demonstrations of action could signify the end results of successfully seeking this aim.

### **Generating Referral Traffic**

Linking to other websites from social media also appeared to be a key strategy. If carried out successfully, this could help to increase awareness by encouraging social media users to find out more about particular campaigns or relevant information. Supporters sharing these links would also be desirable, and so this aim typically falls over the ‘Awareness’ and ‘Awareness–Engagement’ stage of the AEA model. Measuring the click-through rate of the link would give further indications into the main ‘Engagement’ stage.

### **Mobilisation**

There was also evidence in both the interviews and observations that one strategy for social media involved attempting to mobilise the supporter base, or to get them to carry out some sort of action in assistance of the charity. This covers much of the AEA model stages, requiring high awareness to reach a significant number of people, engagement for it to be shared and interacted upon, and then action to ultimately cause something to happen.

### **Fundraising**

Finally, fundraising was regarded mainly as a ‘side-effect’ of achieving these other aims. It appears to be a lower priority, but a desirable outcome if achieved. For the AEA model, this aim focuses mainly on higher level indications of engagement and strong relationships, and action occurring through money being donated.

These aims fairly closely resemble the types of organisational use listed by [Lovejoy and Saxton \(2012\)](#) for USA nonprofits earlier in Section 3.1.2 (acting as an information source, building a community and promoting to and mobilising supporters), which suggests that several of these aims appear to be common across the sector. The variety in strategies listed here shows that social media’s value will differ depending on the context of the organisation using it—and how effectively they adopt these strategies. For example, a charity who aims to generate referral traffic to their site, but rarely posts links, would likely not see much value from their social media use. As such, the way in which these services are used by charities themselves is important in assessing their value and potential performance. By finding how varied the aims are even in this small sample reveals the noteworthiness of recognising that social media performance is not a ‘one size fits all’ measurement or assessment process. Having examined the views of charity employees in this chapter, the following chapter focuses on the opposite side of the interaction and reports on the views of supporters who connect with charities on social media. Following



this another chapter details the next strand of this research that focused on analysing social media data itself to examine engagement, and the first step towards doing this was assessing how the charities themselves were using these services—which could be used as a comparative dataset for the results elicited in this current chapter.

## Chapter 7

# Supporters' Views on the Importance of Social Media for Connecting With Charities

“Increasingly, consumers don’t search for products and services. Rather, services come to their attention via social media.”

— Erik Qualman, author of *Socialnomics*

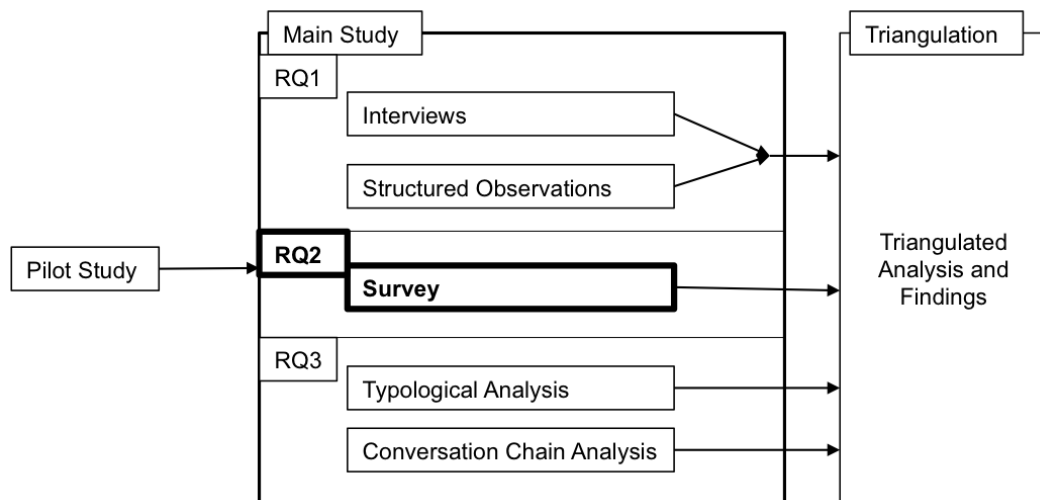


Figure 7.1: Chapter’s placement within wider research design

This chapter presents the result of an investigation into the reasons behind why supporters choose to engage with charities, and what role social media plays in this. This provided the opposite view to why the charity uses social media, and what they want to get out of it, in order to see whether the intentions of each side matched. Alternatively it may have revealed whether the supporters hold different aspirations when connecting to

a charity on these sites, which is important to understand when considering what value they are to the charities themselves. These differences will be explored later when the triangulation process occurs (Figure 7.1).

## 7.1 Survey Design and Sample

In order to provide insights into the final research question, regarding why supporters choose to engage with charities on social media, a survey was designed in accordance to the methodology and design decisions discussed in Section 4.3.2.3. A survey allowed the potential for supporters who were connected to a charity, but who may not necessarily visibly engage with them, to respond and give their views, rather than simply limiting the observation to those who can be seen to interact through social network analysis, for example. The survey asked participants how they interact with charities, and the reasons behind doing so, using a mixture of dichotomous 'yes/no' questions, Likert scales, multiple choice selections and open-ended questions. The design was such that it was not made immediately clear that the survey was interested in social media, and instead focused on how the responders interacted with charities in general. This was important as the intention of eliciting the importance they placed on social media was a big part of this study. Promoting it as a survey based around social media use would have compromised this aspect of the study, as participants would have been primed to think about social media rather than consider it naturally as a channel through which they may interact.

Participants were sought through two approaches. Firstly messages were posted on social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter and Google+) with a link to the survey. Participants were encouraged to share the message containing the link to their own networks, thus enabling snowball sampling to reach increasing numbers of social media users. Some posts were sent directly to influential users on these networks, asking if they would spread the link around their own contacts; additionally requests were made to a number of charities to share the survey link with their supporters. Secondly, a message was posted on the University of Southampton's 'Web Science MOOC' course on the FutureLearn<sup>1</sup> platform, run between February and March 2014. This allowed access to a broader range of participants, who were not necessarily social media users. In total, 139 people started the survey, with 94 of these going on to complete it.

In terms of background data, the priority was establishing whether or not the participant supported a charity (either regularly or had done recently), and whether or not they used social media. Demographic data was not focused upon—the survey was only planned to provide insights into this area rather than make generalisations across a population, and the number of respondents meant that examining reliable trends across demographic

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<sup>1</sup>FutureLearn is owned by the Open University and allows participating institutions to provide massively open online courses - <https://www.futurelearn.com/>

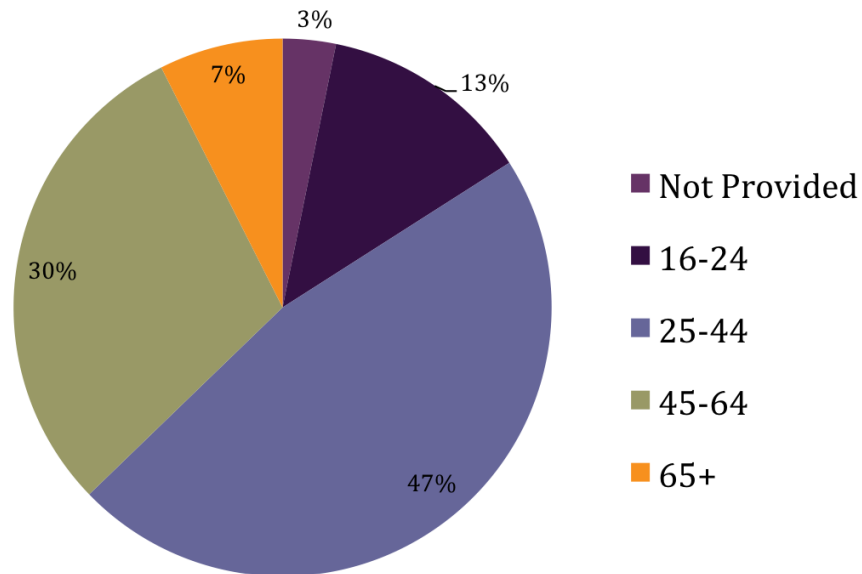


Figure 7.2: Ages of survey participants

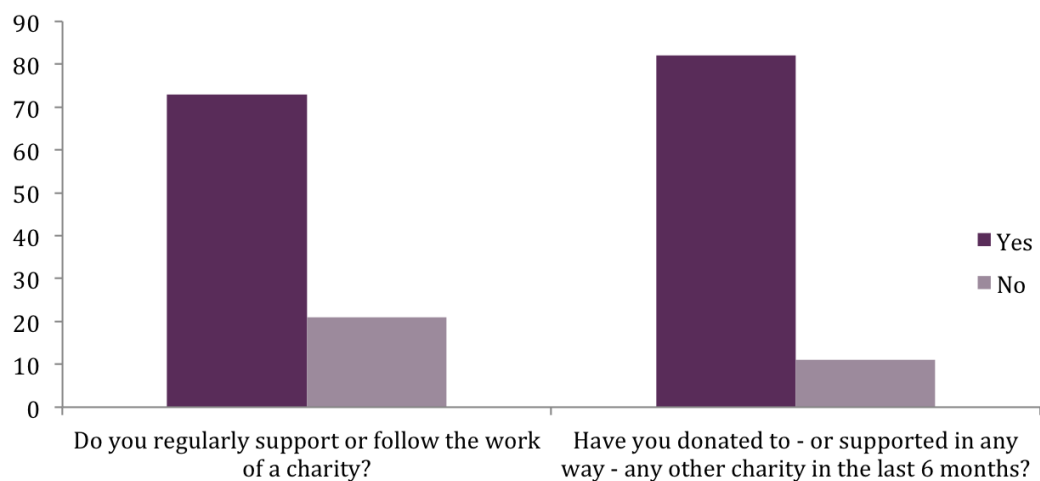


Figure 7.3: Charitable support by survey participants

groups would not have been possible anyway. As such, only the age of participants was requested, and this was an optional question. The 25-44 age group was the largest category, followed by 45-64 (Figure 7.2). 73 of the participants regularly supported at least one charity, while 82 had supported one in the six month period prior to answering the survey (Figure 7.3).

## 7.2 Keeping Up-To-Date With Charities

When asking about how close the respondents felt to the charity's work, it became apparent that the majority (nearly 75%) either felt distant, with a general idea of what

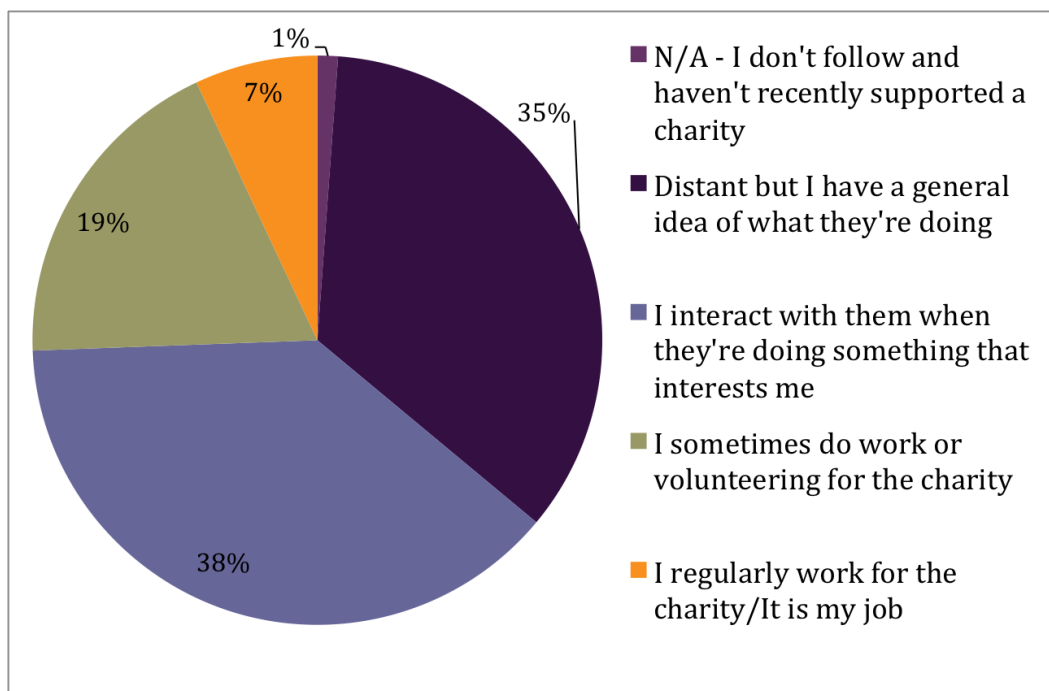


Figure 7.4: How close respondents felt to the charity's work

work the charity was undertaking, or interacted with the charity only when they were doing something that particularly interested them (Figure 7.4). This is important when trying to establish the value of social media for charities, as it suggests that interaction is very much dependent on particular cases of 'interesting' activity, and therefore levels of engagement may appear limited at other times.

One of the primary motivations behind this survey was to discover insights into how valuable the respondents viewed social media as part of an overall selection of communication channels through which interaction with a charity could occur. Participants were asked to rank methods of receiving updates in terms of their importance to them, with the results shown in Figure 7.5. In order to compare the overall rankings of each, weighted averages were calculated so that each service could be compared based on an overall score of importance (Figure 7.6). These results indicate that social media is viewed by the participants as the most valuable channel for staying up-to-date with a charity's work, followed by email updates and the website or blog—indicating a strong level of importance behind digital communication methods.

Table 7.1 shows the reasons behind why participants who had supported a charity within the last 6 months believed they had been motivated to do so. It can be seen from this that there are fewer levels of higher influence around social media, suggesting that while it is highly valued for finding out information about the charity, supporters do not perceive it to have much effect on them deciding to act. The weighted averages for these values were calculated and are shown in Figure 7.7. It is apparent that compared to a supporter's general interest, a post on social media has a relatively low level of influence on deciding

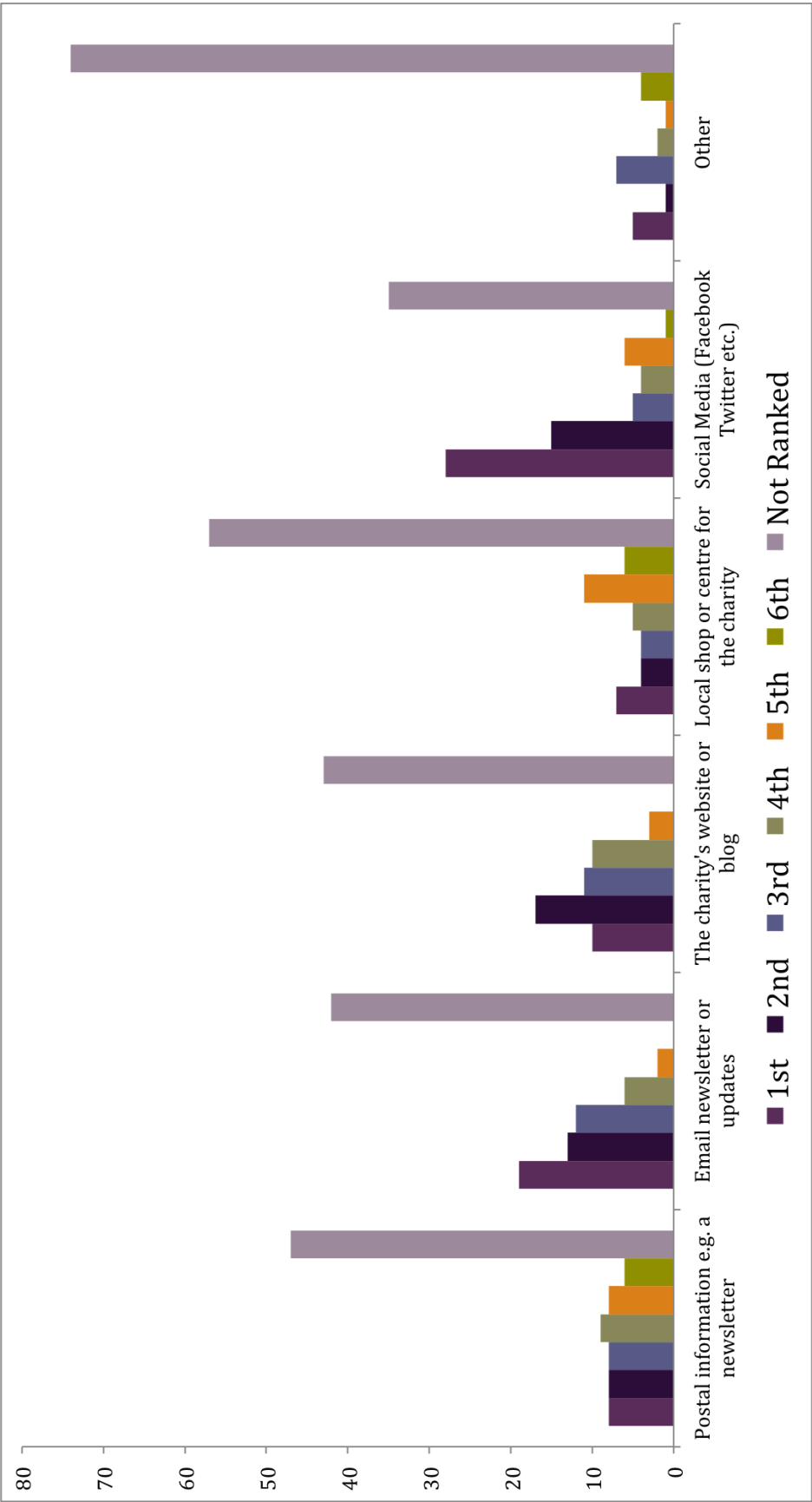


Figure 7.5: Importance of particular channels for finding out about a charity's work

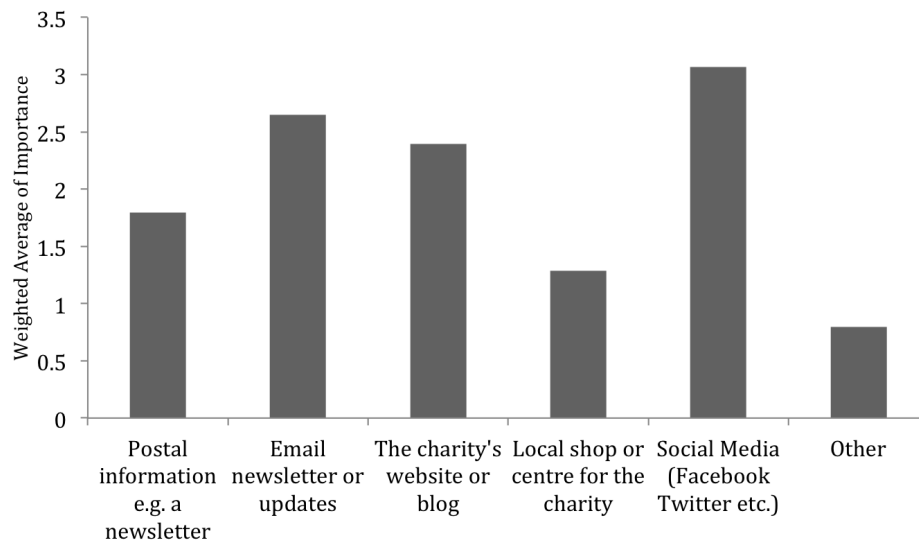


Figure 7.6: Weighted average scores of importance for each channel

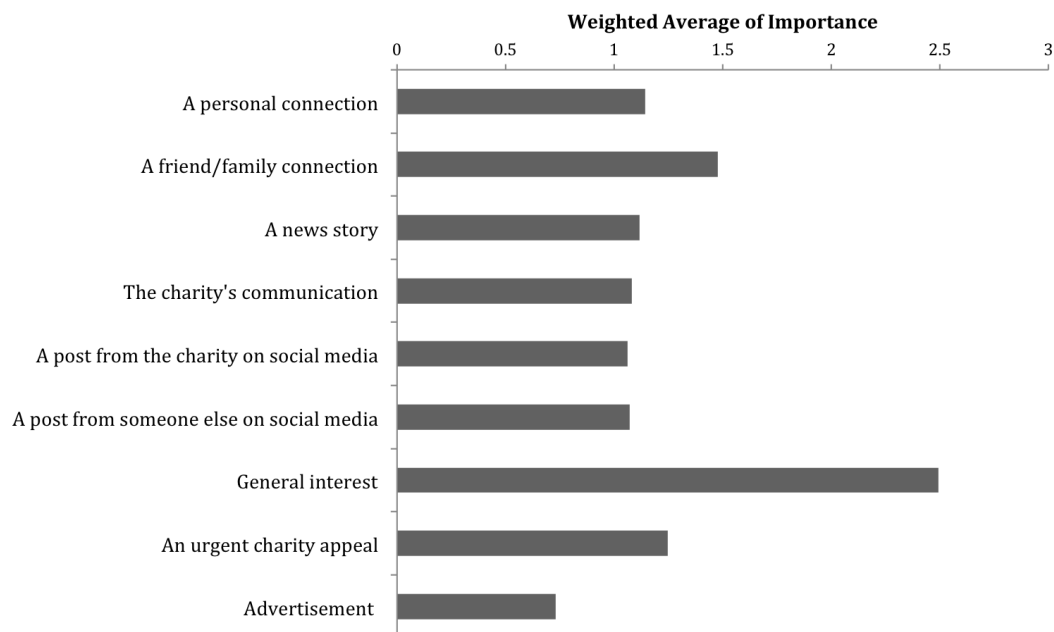


Figure 7.7: Weighted average scores of perceived influence for each factor.

whether or not to act in support, and so the scope for using social media to encourage action may be limited.

However the argument of social media's use as an information source is reinforced from looking at where respondents stated they would go to find out the latest information on a charity. As Figure 7.8 shows, 98% of respondents would go to either the charity's website, or social media to find this information. While social media only accounted for 18% by itself, these figures highlight the importance of Web-based information, and social media can provide a way to generate additional traffic towards the website. Related to this, displayed in Figure 7.9 is the frequency by which supporters receive updates through social media, which is much greater than other channels with weekly and even daily updates not uncommon.

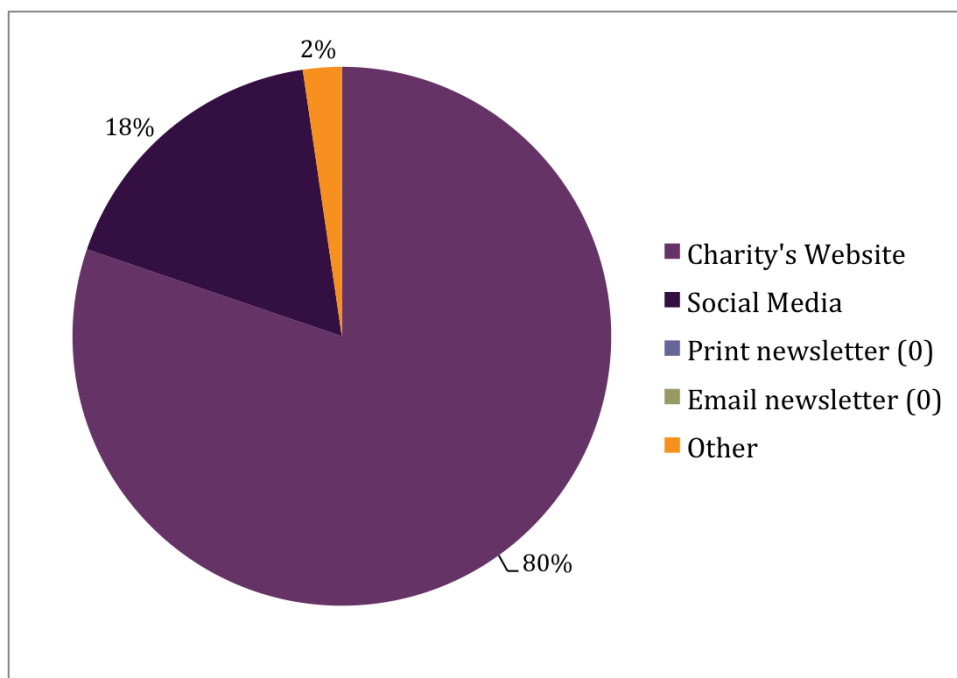


Figure 7.8: Sources that participant would go to in order to find the latest information about a charity.

### 7.3 Engaging with Charities

The previous section highlighted the survey questions that were focused on the ways in which supporters kept updated with charities. This section moves on to look at how the respondents went about contacting and engaging with charities. Firstly, after asking whether or not supporters *had* contacted a charity—which 34 of the respondents had done—the survey asked these participants to list the channels that they had used, with the results shown in Table 7.2. These figures show that social media is not viewed as one of the primary methods by which supporters appear to contact charities—even though



| <b>Influence</b>                         | A personal connection | A friend/- family connection | A news story | The charity's communication (newsletter, update etc.) | A post from the charity on social media | A post from someone else on social media | General interest in the charity's work | An urgent charity appeal | Advertisement (television, radio, newspaper etc.) |
|--|-----------------------|------------------------------|--------------|---|---|--|--|--------------------------|---|
| Not at all                               | 51                    | 38                           | 36           | 31  | 35                                      | 38                                       | 10                                     | 34                       | 41  |
| A slight influence                       | 4                     | 5                            | 14           | 19  | 14                                      | 11                                       | 9                                      | 15                       | 21  |
| A moderate influence                     | 6                     | 12                           | 18           | 22  | 16                                      | 10                                       | 13                                     | 13                       | 12  |
| The main - but not exclusive - influence | 7                     | 10                           | 10           | 7   | 6                                       | 13                                       | 27                                     | 7                        | 3   |
| Completely                               | 15                    | 17                           | 4            | 2   | 6                                       | 5  | 24                                     | 11                       | 2   |
| N/A                                      | 2                     | 4                            | 4            | 4   | 6                                       | 7  | 2                                      | 5                        | 6   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                             | <b>85</b>             | <b>86</b>                    | <b>86</b>    | <b>85</b>   | <b>83</b>                               | <b>84</b>                                | <b>85</b>                              | <b>85</b>                | <b>85</b>   |

Table 7.1: Reasons behind participants recently supporting a charity

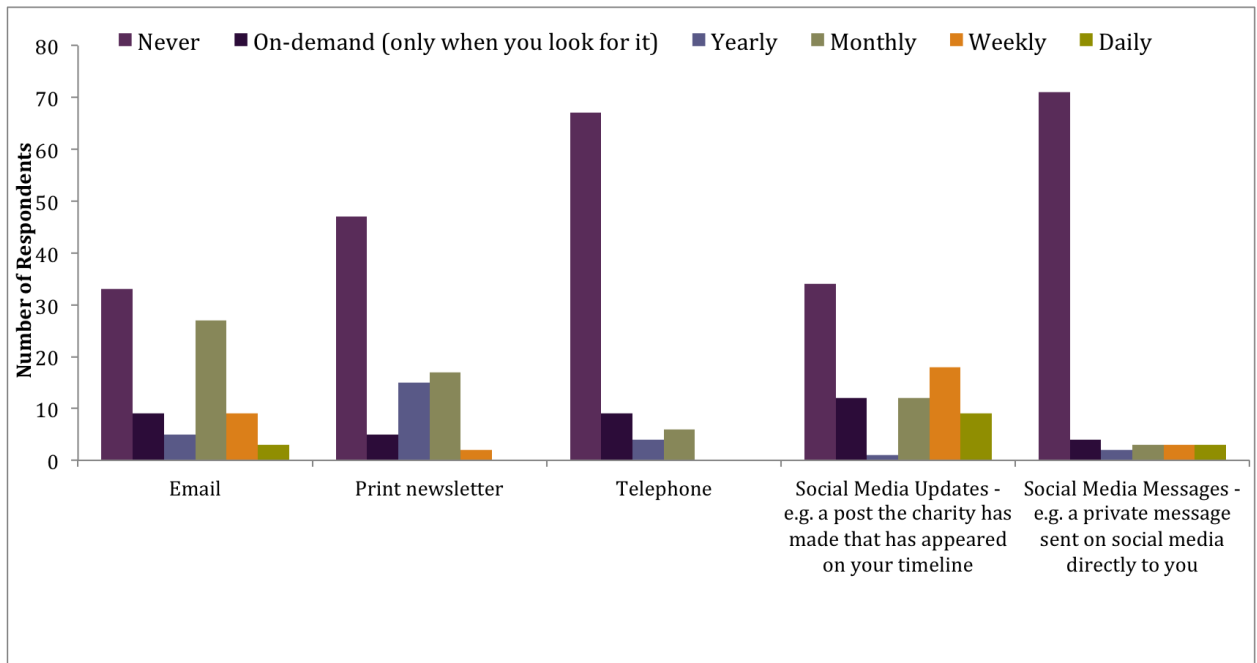


Figure 7.9: Regularity by which supporters receive updates from charities through various channels.

the sample of respondents is sourced online, many of whom will have been sourced from social media platforms themselves. This would suggest that supporters do not see social media as a priority platform when they consider contacting with, or engaging with, a charity. Table 7.3 shows the responses of those who had not contacted a charity regarding the channel that they *would* use if they were to do so, and again social media falls short of both email and the charity's website—although these results are based on what people think they would do in a hypothetical situation, so are not completely reliable.

|     | Telephone Call | In person | Via their website | Via social media | Email | Other |
|-----|----------------|-----------|-------------------|------------------|-------|-------|
| Yes | 11             | 15        | 8                 | 9                | 17    | 3     |

Table 7.2: Methods used to contact charities

|     | Telephone Call | In person | Via their website | Via social media | Email | Other |
|-----|----------------|-----------|-------------------|------------------|-------|-------|
| Yes | 6              | 5         | 28                | 17               | 28    | 2     |

Table 7.3: Methods that would hypothetically be used to contact charities

The next question asked how involved the participants felt in the charitable community. The results, shown in Figure 7.10 show a skew towards the lower end of the scale, indicating that there is only a small portion of supporters in this sample who feel more than moderately engaged. Figure 7.11 suggests, however, that feeling a part of this

community is generally important to supporters, and so this suggests an area of potential that social media use could help to improve.

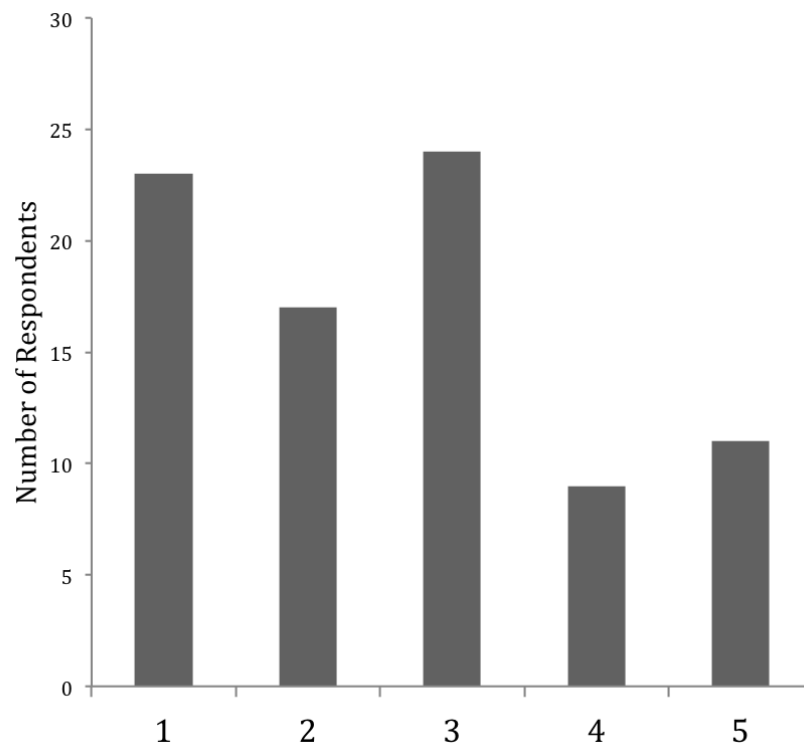


Figure 7.10: Extent to which participants felt involved in the charitable community (from 1 (low) to 5 (high)).

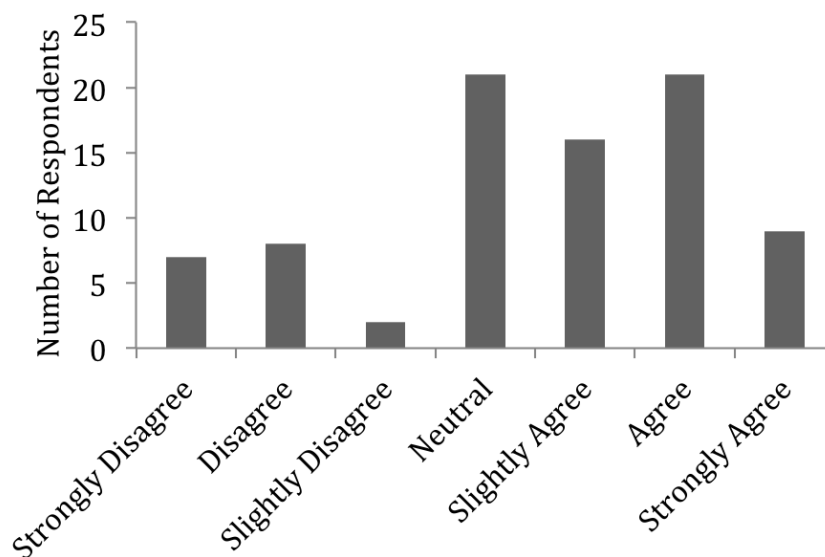


Figure 7.11: Extent to which participants agree with the statement "Being part of a charitable community is important to me".

When the participants were asked whether they had participated in the community at all, 40 stated that they had done so. They were then asked about the ways in which

they had participated, which are shown in Figure 7.12. This shows, surprisingly, that supporters tended to carry out actions such as fundraising or attending events *more* than interacting on social media, although the results were close. A result such as this has huge implications for determining social media value, and establishing the balance in expectations between charity and supporters. Furthermore, social media did not appear to be seen as a suitable channel for donating to charities (Figure 7.13).

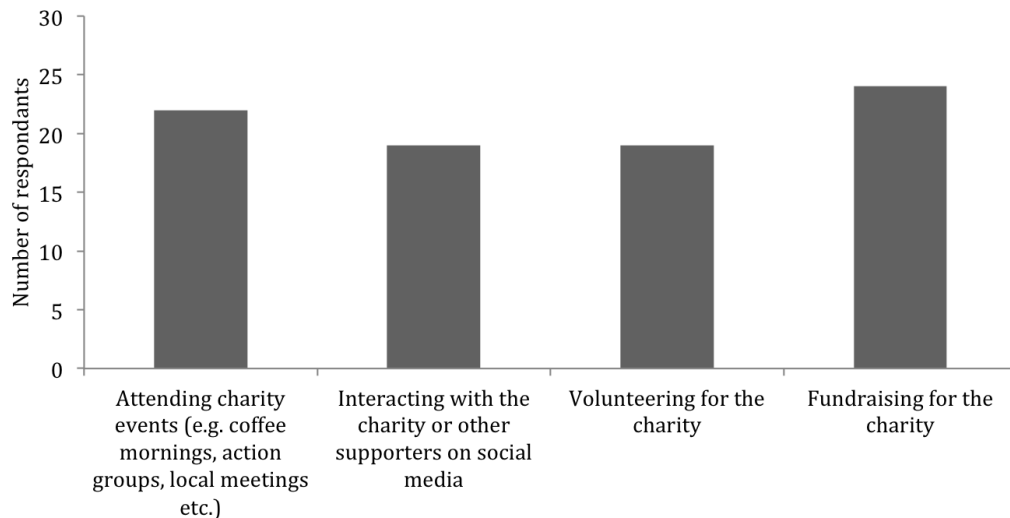


Figure 7.12: Activities undertaken by those supporters who had participated in the charitable community.

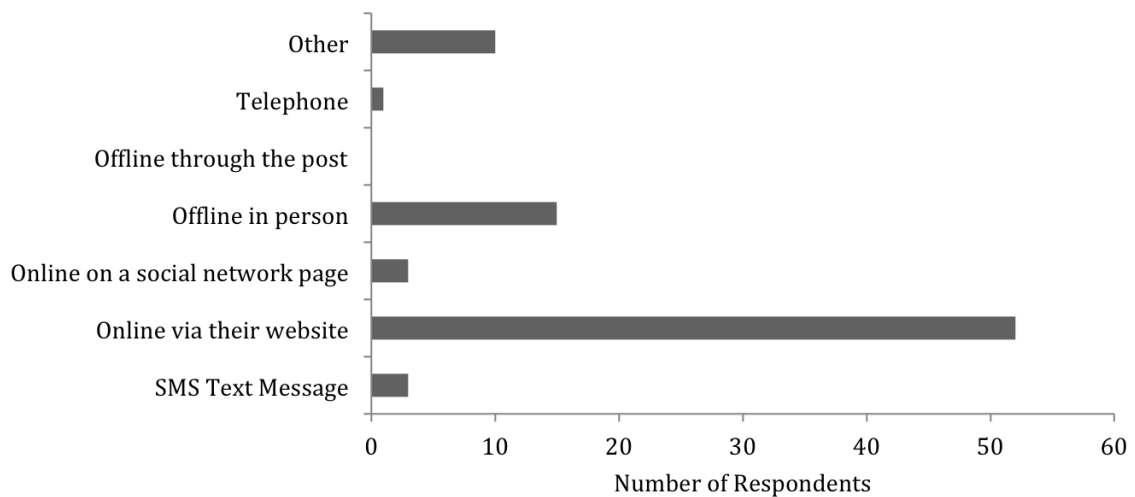


Figure 7.13: Channels that participants would use to donate to a charity.

## 7.4 Use of Social Media

The 94 respondents were then asked directly whether or not they used social media to either follow or interact with a charity. 54 of these participants stated that they did

so, and were then asked to list the benefits that they thought they received from doing so. These are displayed in Figure 7.14, and show that the main advantage supporters perceive to gain is up-to-date news about the charity, rather than any specific advice, motivation or community spirit. Opportunities to help also appeared to be a benefit that supporters were interested in, although not to the same level as news updates.

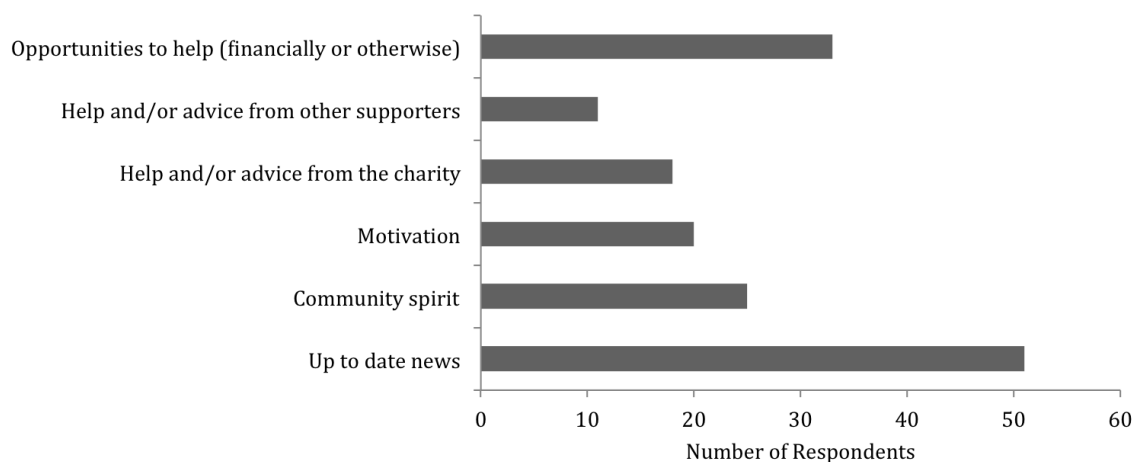


Figure 7.14: Benefits that respondents thought they received from interacting with charities on social media.

Participants were also asked how regularly they used different social network services, and to what extent they interacted with charities on them. Figure 7.15 shows this breakdown, and reveals that apart from Facebook and Twitter, there is very little interaction with charities. Also noteworthy from this chart is that more users stated they interacted with charities on Twitter than they did on Facebook, despite more using Facebook to connect to (like) a charity. This might suggest that while Facebook is favoured for passively receiving updates from a charity in a news feed, Twitter is more attractive for users to actually engage.

Finally, participants were asked to show the extent to which they connected with charities on social media (Figure 7.16). This chart shows that there is a steady drop off in utilisation as the level of engagement on offer increases, with textual forms of interaction used the least. This again suggests that from the supporter point of view, interaction through the form of conversation does not appear to be a priority, and that social media seems to be viewed much more as an information source instead.

## 7.5 Discussion

While the survey was not designed to produce findings that could be generalised and suggest trends across the entire population of charitable supporters on social media, it

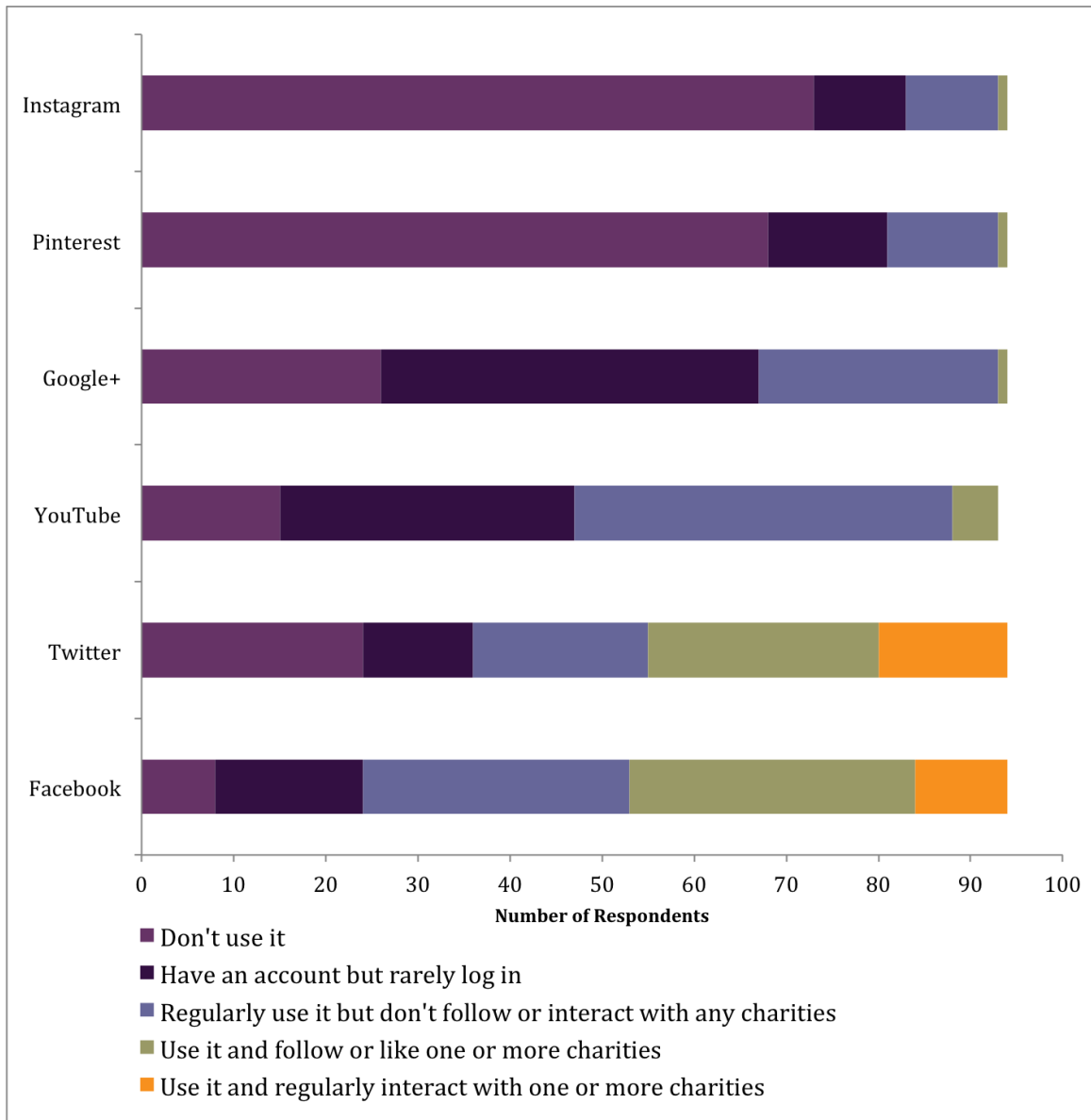


Figure 7.15: Level of use of various social networks in terms of charitable interaction.

has revealed a number of interesting insights into what could have an impact when considering social media's value. There is a strong suggestion that supporters view social media as a channel for finding out the latest information about a charity, helped by the regularity by which they receive updates through the various networks. However the influence of this appears limited: supporters felt distant from the charities' work and many didn't feel involved in the charitable community, despite their suggestions that being part of such a community was important. Interaction seems to occur most when the charity does something of particular interest to a supporter, although supporters themselves do not perceive social media to be a channel which influences them to go on and act in other ways, such as donating or volunteering—general interest and close connections are, perhaps unsurprisingly, viewed as much more powerful sources of influence.

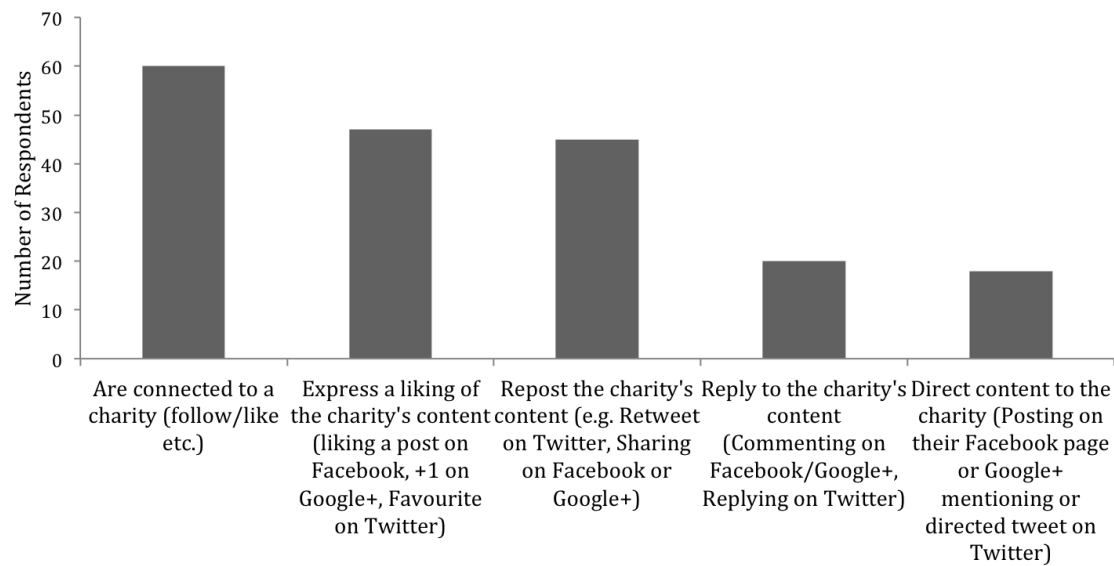


Figure 7.16: Extent to which respondents are connected to or engage with charities on social media.

Interestingly, the results shown in Figure 7.14 depicting the benefits that respondents felt they received from connecting with charities on social media appear to conflict with the reasons Twitter itself lists in its 'Small Business Guide' (Twitter, Last accessed: 06 Oct 2014). Whereas up to date news appeared to be the most common advantage in this survey, the Twitter guide suggests that only 69% of users follow a brand to hear company news (Twitter, Last accessed: 06 Oct 2014)<sup>2</sup>. This may reflect a difference between a typical small business and a charitable organisation, highlighting the importance of carrying out targeted research on the charitable domain. The data that the Twitter guide presents in this case originates from a survey undertaken by Compete, which shows the reasons that users follow a brand on Twitter, or Like them on Facebook (Perlman, 2011). Each listed reason scored a higher percentage of users stating that it was why they followed the brand on Twitter, than for users Liking the brand on Facebook, which suggests that users may find more reasons to connect on Twitter than Facebook—and this is reflected in the current results shown in Figure 7.15 where Twitter was preferred for interaction (Perlman, 2011).

In terms of determining social media's value to charities, these findings are important indications of how supporters may engage on social networking sites. While they are based on what the supporters think and self-report, they do suggest that fostering engagement with large numbers of users on these sites could be difficult for charities to achieve. However, in terms of increasing awareness, spreading news and promoting important campaigns or messages, social media could offer some valuable returns. The results in Figure 7.14 which show that gaining opportunities to help was the second most popular

<sup>2</sup>The Small Business Guide is no longer accessible from the Twitter website, but the data referred to in the guide is sourced from 'Compete Pulse' and is available from Perlman (2011).

'benefit' that supporters thought they received from social media, indicates that coupled with the high volume of news from regular updates, social media sits at an important and influential junction between the charity and their supporter-base. However when compared to the intentions of the charities reported in the previous chapter there is likely to be a mis-match of expectations regarding the use of these sites as the charities' focus is much more on engagement and action, whereas the supporters appeared more receptive of awareness-generating techniques. This is an important point to consider when establishing social media value, and will be addressed further in the overall triangulation process and discussion. The following chapter focuses on the analysis of social media data from two perspectives to mirror these last two chapters: firstly to show how charities use social media to communicate, and secondly to show how supporters respond to these messages. This data will serve as the final input to the resulting triangulation, and will provide evidence for and against the views of both the charities and supporters.





## Chapter 8

# Charitable Engagement on Social Media

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

— George Bernard Shaw

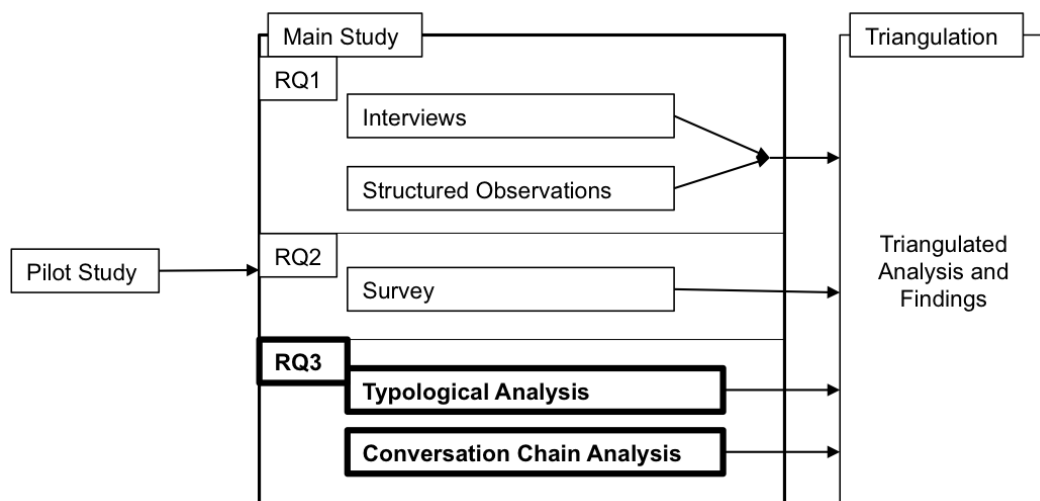


Figure 8.1: Chapter’s placement within wider research design

This chapter focuses on the measurement of social media in order to assess how it is used for engagement between charities and their supporters. The chapter is broken into two sections which each focus on one of the methods highlighted in Figure 8.1. The first section discusses the typological analysis carried out on charities’ Twitter accounts, which had the aim of creating a classification schema of communication ‘styles’ on the social network. An automated system developed using the theory behind this work was demonstrated at the 2013 Digital Economy conference ([Phethean et al., 2013a](#)).

The second section moves on to present an analysis of conversation chains on Facebook and Twitter, with the aim of showing how supporters engage and converse with the charities, and how this differs across the two networks. This combined quantitative statistical techniques with a small amount of qualitative content analysis in order to provide insights, which were subsequently presented as a poster and short presentation at the Web Science 2014 conference ([Phethean et al., 2014](#)).

## 8.1 Typological Analysis of Communication Styles by Charities

During the pilot study, it was observed—using just the breakdown of new tweets, replies and retweets that they sent—that the two charities being focused upon exhibited very different styles of communication on Twitter (Section 5.3). There was an indication from this data that particular aspects of communication could be identified, such as two-way conversations if it appeared both the charity and their audience were sending a large number of replies. Alternatively, broadcast mechanisms were observable if the charity was sending a lot of new content, rarely replying, and their audience was amplifying this through retweeting. This was used as an initial starting point for creating a classification of communication styles on Twitter, which this section will now discuss. The purpose and intention behind this was to provide insights into a charity’s use of social media, which could then be used in comparison to their motivations in order to help analyse their performance and potential success on the sites.

### 8.1.1 Background

There are numerous analytic tools that are available for organisations to use in order to track their social media performance. Many of these are available—either completely, or in some capacity—for free, which makes them attractive to organisations such as charities who may not have the resources to invest large sums of money in to monitoring their social presence. Table 8.1 shows the variety of information that some of these tools can provide<sup>1</sup>. It also reveals, however, that it is uncommon for these tools to provide sophisticated analysis around whether a particular goal is being met, or how the organisation’s own behaviour correlates with these goals or the audience’s behaviour; instead they appear to try and provide a ‘one-size fits all’ approach to measuring performance on social media. By examining the aims elicited in Chapter 6 and listed in Section 6.5, it can be seen that in order to achieve each of these, different styles of communication would be required. Building on previous work described in the background chapters—and summarised in Table 8.2, this section aimed to provide a lightweight and simple method of measuring

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<sup>1</sup>This table has been reproduced and used in the University of Southampton’s Digital Marketing massively open online course (MOOC) hosted by FutureLearn.

| Feature  | Twitonomy | Simply Measured | Foller.me | TWTRLAND | TwitterCounter | Tweetreach | Mentionmapp | Twitalyzer |
|--|-----------|-----------------|-----------|----------|----------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| Breakdown of tweet type (replies, retweets, new)                         | ✓         |                 | ✓         | ✓        |                | ✓          |             |            |
| Frequency of link use  | ✓         |                 | ✓         | ✓        |                |            |             |            |
| Topic of messages sent   |           |                 | ✓         |          |                |            |             | ✓          |
| Breakdown of audience response types (replies etc.)                      | ✓         |                 | ✓         |          |                |            |             |            |
| Popular tweet identification   | ✓         |                 |           |          |                | ✓          |             |            |
| Temporal breakdown of activity   | ✓         | ✓               | ✓         |          | ✓              | ✓          | ✓           | ✓          |
| Audience analysis (e.g. popularity)                                      | ✓         | ✓               |           |          |                | ✓          |             |            |
| Network analysis   |           |                 |           |          |                |            | ✓           |            |
| Cause/effect analysis (comparison of organisation vs audience behaviour) |           |                 |           |          | ✓              |            |             |            |
| Goal-oriented statistics (linked to any particular goal)                 |           | ✓               |           |          |                | ✓          |             |            |
| Classification of account style  |           |                 |           |          |                |            |             | ✓          |

Table 8.1: Features of existing free analytic tools (for Twitter) as of 1st April 2014.

| Citation                                   | Finding   |
|--|---|
| <a href="#">Waters and Williams (2011)</a> | Categorisation of governmental agencies by separating into one-way and two-way public relations models to demonstrate the extent to which informational or communicational messages are used. |
| <a href="#">Cho et al. (2014)</a>          | People were more likely to comment on Facebook if an organisation used two-way, symmetrical conversation, rather than one-way communication.  |
| <a href="#">Waters and Jamal (2011)</a>    | USA nonprofits primarily utilised one-way messages for sharing information.   |
| <a href="#">Lovejoy and Saxton (2012)</a>  | Very few USA nonprofits used social media for building a community or mobilising supporters, instead it was used more as an informational channel.  |
| <a href="#">Auger (2013)</a>               | Advocacy groups appeared to use Twitter mainly for providing thanks, whereas Twitter was used for soliciting feedback.  |

Table 8.2: Summary of background literature used for the classification study

a charity’s own communication on social media that, by classifying it into a style, could suggest whether or not a particular strategy was likely to be achieved. Commonly, existing studies have used content analysis to determine the types of message sent by an organisation or groups of organisations (for example [Waters and Jamal \(2011\)](#); [Lovejoy and Saxton \(2012\)](#); [Auger \(2013\)](#)). While this provides detailed analysis of *what* is being said, it is difficult to automate or to provide as a service through which charities could access on-demand to analyse their own social media use. Consequently, the work in this section aimed to develop a classification system based on the *types* of message sent, which could be carried out automatically through the use of a single algorithm, and distinguish different strategical uses of social media.

### 8.1.2 Sample Data

To allow the analysis of charitable communication on social media, data was required to show what types of messages a sample of charities sent on one of these platforms. Twitter was chosen for this purpose due to the public nature of the majority of its content. Using this, it was planned to observe the statistical breakdown of tweets—how many were new tweets, replies, or retweets—and to categorise groups of charities based on these proportions, which followed a similar approach to that adopted in the quantitative portion of [Boyd et al. \(2010\)](#)’s study. The types of tweet, along with features that can be included in tweets—hashtags and URLs—are explained in Table 8.3 and represent the different ways in which an organisation can communicate on Twitter using the standard features available. The approach allowed the data to be observed without

| Message Type or Feature | Description   | Communication Facilitated   |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| New Tweets              | Standard message  | Broadcast mechanism for disseminating new information, updates or questions.  |
| Replies                 | Message to form a conversation with another user                    | Conversation facilitation by building a chain of messages between users.  |
| Mentions                | Standard message with user tagged                                   | Directly refer a user to a specific message.  |
| Retweets                | Reposting another user's message                                    | Viral spreading of content and acknowledgement of reading.  |
| Hashtags                | Words or phrases prefixed with the # symbol to categorise a message | Tag a conversation with a particular phrase so that it can be found by others, or so that responses and similar messages can be collected easily. |
| URLs                    | Links to other content on the Web                                   | Content sharing through referring the reader to another website for more information.   |

Table 8.3: Communication options and features on Twitter

any prior assumptions about what it may or may not show, and so it was categorised without any bias towards any type of message that was to be expected. Tinati et al. (2012) used a similar strategy to classify individual user roles on Twitter, by applying restrictive properties on particular categories that statistically assigned cases to groups. Subsequently, it was planned that data would be obtained on how organisations used Twitter. This would then be examined for trends, and finally restrictions would be elicited on particular statistics to group those cases that demonstrated certain styles.

The Twitter Search API was used to retrieve one week's worth of data from a selection of charities in August 2013. A total of 112 charities were used, comprising of those seen as 'top' social brands (in the Social Brands 100 reports<sup>2</sup>) or large charitable brands (from the Charity Brand Index<sup>3</sup>). Jeans for Genes was again added to the dataset—as in Section 6.1—to ensure the sample of interviewed charities remained present to provide continuity throughout the triangulation, and Wessex Heartbeat—a small charity based in Southampton—was also added as part of a local case study. A subsample of these organisations was used to develop the typology initially, consisting of the 21 charities that were used in Section 6.1, along with 6 new organisations that were in the following

<sup>2</sup><http://socialbrands100.com>

<sup>3</sup><http://www.thirdsectorresearch.com/charity-brand-index.php>

year's (2013) Social Brands 100 report—this ensured that the charities with the ‘best’ social presence were included in the sample so that successful strategies were captured. An additional 12 organisations were selected randomly from the Charity Brand Index to increase the size of this subsample to 39 organisations and in order to allow a wider range of strategies to be examined that were not just those employed by charities that already had strong social media communities. The remaining 73 charities were then used to test and refine the classification. Purely statistical data was collected, summarising how many tweets had been sent and the breakdown of these regarding new tweets, replies and retweets. Additionally the number of URLs per tweet was also recorded to provide some indication of whether using links was a popular strategy, as were the number of hashtags used in either new tweets or replies.

A short timeframe of a week was used, partly down to the restrictions of the Twitter Search API which only allows 7 days worth of data to be accessed. While larger datasets can be collected by ‘harvesting’ tweets about particular keywords over time, these have to be setup in advance so that the data can be stored as it is produced. To allow this classification to be used on a sample of over a hundred charities, it was more appropriate to access the data directly from Twitter, and limit the dataset to a week per charity. A time-based sample was chosen, rather than a fixed number of tweets (as in [Waters and Williams \(2011\)](#)) so that the data would represent the *level* of activity for each charity, in addition to the style—this would identify those charities that were *not* utilising Twitter as a communication platform to the same extent as others.

For seven of the charities (the five interviewed charities: Diabetes UK, The Dogs Trust, Help for Heroes, Jeans for Genes, Woodland Trust along with Wessex Heartbeat and The National Trust), larger datasets were available from the University of Southampton's Tweet Harvester service<sup>4</sup>. After validating the classification system (discussed below), a 30-week period (June–December 2013) was examined for these organisations in order to determine whether the communication style remained consistent over a period of time.

### 8.1.3 Classifications

A typological analysis was carried out on the data from the 39 charity subsample, following the method plan in Section 4.3.2.4. Initial base categories were designed around the proportions of retweets, replies and new tweets sent by the charity within the sample. Majorities in any of these types of tweet (over 50%) were seen as the initial classifying criterion. This overall style would indicate a general trend in the organisation's communication pattern, and help indicate a use inline with some of the aims elicited in Section 6.5. The 50% limit provides a constant threshold which can be applied to each week of data—its use was selected *based* on the observation of the data in the sample but not affected by, calculated with, or necessarily dependent on it. Therefore the exact same

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<sup>4</sup><http://tweets.soton.ac.uk/>

| Number of Charities | Role in Study           | Source  |
|---------------------|-------------------------|---|
| 21                  | Classification Creation | Charities used in Section <a href="#">6.1</a>   |
| 6                   | Classification Creation | Social Brands 100 2013  |
| 12                  | Classification Creation | 2012 Charity Brand Index  |
| 73                  | Classification Test     | 2012 Charity Brand Index (remaining charities excluding those already selected, or those without a Twitter account) |

Table 8.4: Sample details

broad classification could be applied on each subsequent set of data that may be analysed, and this would be based on an environmental phenomenon (one tweet type having a proportional majority) rather than a value calculated from one particular sample of data. Automated clustering techniques could have been adopted for this, but typically would not have allowed the flexibility afforded by this more observational approach—for example K-means clustering would have required the number of categories to be pre-determined and therefore would restrict the granularity of the resulting classification.

An additional threshold on overall use was also added to highlight any charities that were tweeting very rarely: this was set to 14 replies or new tweets (combined) and 7 retweets within a week. Higher values than these would indicate that the charity was posting content at the level of a least two messages per day, or retweeting once per day to show they are tuned in to the peripheral conversations around them. Finally, a threshold on URL use was proposed where organisations were divided based on whether or not they posted more than 3 URLs per 4 tweets made (or 0.75 URLs per tweet). A higher value than this would indicate that the charity nearly always posted a link to accompany a new tweet, which could potentially indicate a strategy to refer supporters elsewhere. No observable patterns were noticed regarding hashtag use, and so this feature was not used



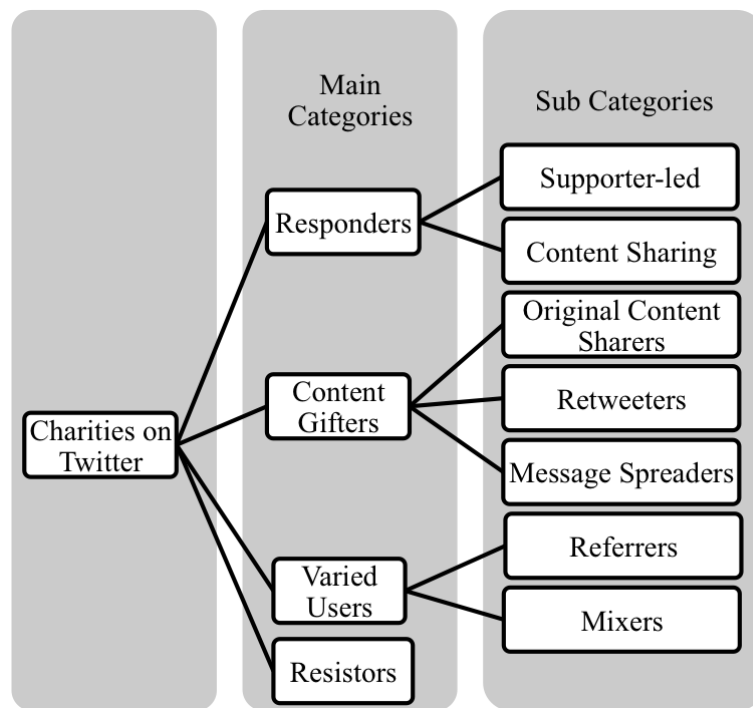


Figure 8.2: Final typology of communication styles on Twitter

in any of the classification profiles. To ensure that the classification would be complete, a ‘varied use’ umbrella category was detailed to contain those charities that did not fall in to any of these main categories.

Charities were initially placed into these categories before the statistics were examined more closely in order to identify subgroups that represented different styles of communication that were being repeated. This allowed for more specific categorisation than the broad initial groups decided primarily by the presence of a tweet type having a proportional majority. The resulting profiles are depicted in Figure 8.2, with explanations of each below:

#### 8.1.3.1 Responders

The responders profile consists of all charities that favoured replies over new tweets or retweets. Members of this group had more than half of their tweets as replies, suggesting that they were heavily involved in engaging in conversation and were embracing two-way communication as described by [Waters and Williams \(2011\)](#). To distinguish charities within this category, two subcategories were made based on the supplemental usage of new tweets.

##### Supporter-led Responders

Supporter-led responders were those charities which posted far more replies compared to the number of new tweets that could actually have been posted to start

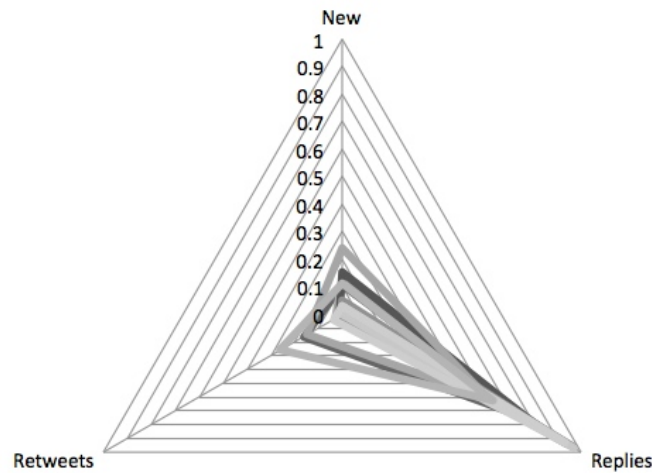


Figure 8.3: Tweet distribution for supporter-led responders

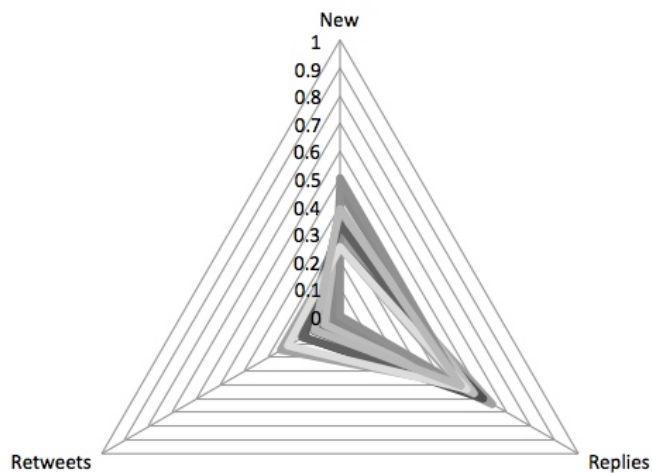


Figure 8.4: Tweet distribution for content sharing responders

a conversation. As such, a supporter-led responder was a responder whose new tweets were under 25% of their total tweets (Figure 8.3).

### Content Sharing Responders

Alternatively, content sharing responders were those responders with more than 25% new tweets. These were charities who still favoured replying to their supporters, but had produced a relatively higher proportion of new content themselves (Figure 8.4).

#### 8.1.3.2 Content Gifters

The gifters category (named so based on [Evans \(2010\)](#)'s description of organisations sharing content as gifts) refers to the charities that favour sharing their own, original content over replying to other people's messages. A number of subcategories are present

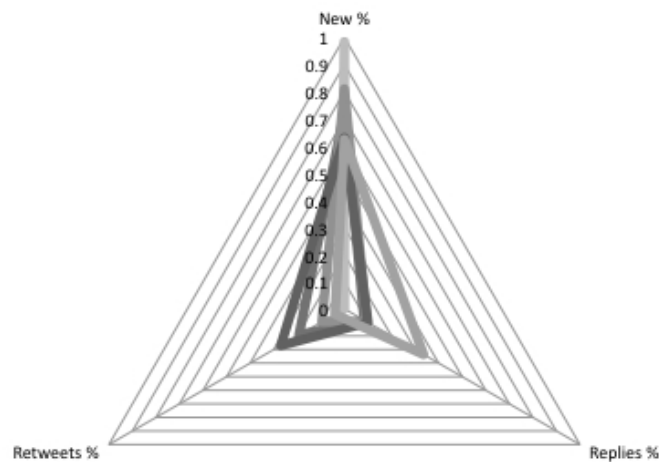


Figure 8.5: Tweet distribution for original content sharers

within this group, each focusing on sharing different types of content, which are described below.

### Original Content Sharers

Original content sharers are the gifters who favour new tweets (more than 50% of total tweets) and regularly post URLs in these tweets (over 0.75 URLs per tweet). Without looking at the content of the tweets, it can not be claimed what kind of content they were sharing with any certainty—indicating one of the shortcomings of this approach—but it would seem to suggest that these charities were interested in sending messages to their followers and referring them to other sites on the Web (Figure 8.5).

### Message Spreaders

As with original content sharers, message spreaders favour new tweets, but don't post URLs to the same extent (under 0.75 URLs per tweet). This group reflects those charities who tended to post new content which could be in the form of key updates on their work or short informational messages, and focus these as standalone messages which do not require a link to be followed.

### Retweeters

The category of retweeters is the gifters who favoured retweeting over any other form of tweet (more than 50% of total tweets). This suggested that they were willing to view the messages from others and take the time to appreciate what others were saying, and then share it with their own followers. This supports the work by [Boyd et al. \(2010\)](#) who states that some participants wanted to show involvement in conversation by recognising the contribution of others, even if they did not go on to contribute a message of their own (Figure 8.6).

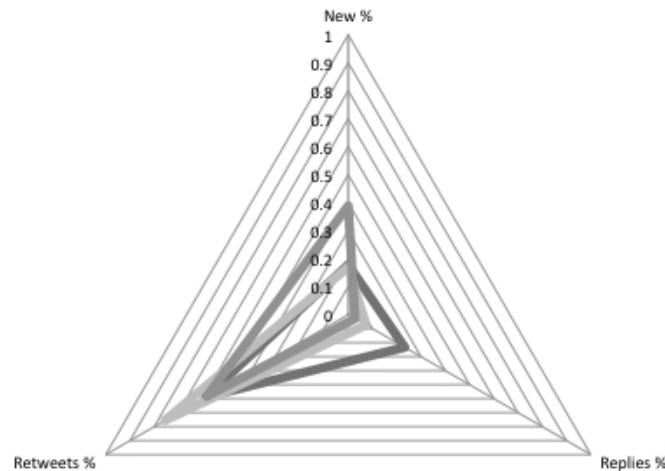


Figure 8.6: Tweet distribution for retweeters

### 8.1.3.3 Varied Users

The varied users category does not contain any charities that have a majority of any one type of tweet. The subcategories are defined by the use of URLs, or by the lack of use of Twitter overall.

#### Referrers

Referrers show a balance between the types of tweets they send without reaching the 50% majority for any format. In each new tweet that they send, it is probable that a URL is included (over 0.75 URLs per new tweet).

#### Mixers

This category reflects the charities who as with referrers, have varied use across all three categories of tweet. However they do not post content or URLs to the same extent as the referrer category.

#### Resistors

Resistors show low use of Twitter. They appear to have an account for the social presence, rather than to engage their supporters in any kind of communication. Resistors post 14 or fewer replies and new tweets (combined), and 7 or fewer retweets each week. Being classified outside of this category shows that a charity is producing new content frequently.

### 8.1.4 Automated Classification Algorithm Test

In order to ensure and verify that the categories elicited above were valid, complete, and could be automatically discovered using data gained dynamically from the Twitter Search API, an extension to the data collection program was developed. An algorithm

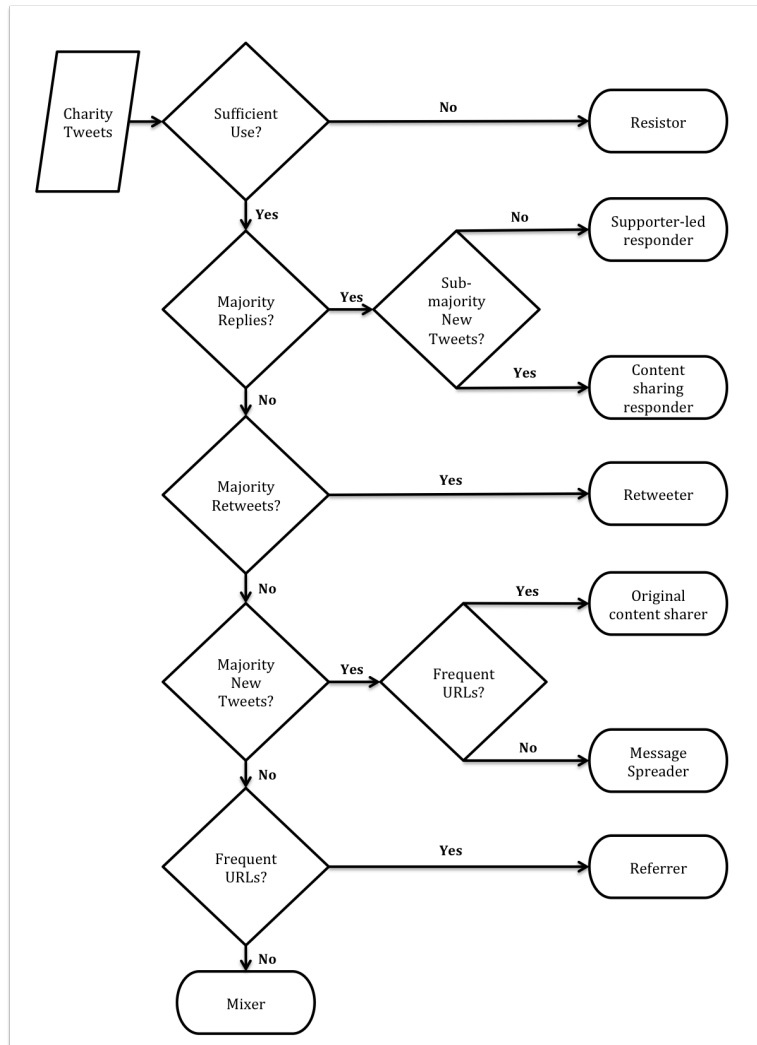


Figure 8.7: Flow diagram for Twitter conversation classifier

was added, based on the restrictions for each category described above, which would automatically place a given charity into one of the categories given the raw data directly from Twitter. Using the categories devised above, the algorithm ensured that the classification was complete and a charity would always be assigned into one of the given groups (Figure 8.7). Using the entire 112 charity sample, the program was run and each charity was assigned to a category, with the results displayed in Table 8.5.

### 8.1.5 Analysis Over Time

For 7 of the sampled charities, a larger dataset was available. The classification algorithm was run on each week for a 30-week period between June and December 2013. Each week was classified independently, with the intention of discovering lasting trends for each organisation. The results are shown in Figure 8.8. Interestingly, 5 of the charities had at least 22/30 (73.3%) of weeks classified as a single category. In one particular case—the

| Category                   | Frequency |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| Supporter-led Responders   | 9         |
| Content Sharing Responders | 13        |
| Original Content Sharers   | 17        |
| Message Spreaders          | 12        |
| Retweeters                 | 9         |
| Referrers                  | 17        |
| Mixers                     | 8         |
| Resistors                  | 27        |
| Total                      | 112       |

Table 8.5: Classification Test Results

National Trust—all 30 weeks fell into the same category of supporter-led responder. For DiabetesUK, all 30 weeks fell in to the broader ‘responder’ category, while the Woodland Trust had 26 in the ‘content gifters’ and the Dogs Trust had 25 in the overall ‘responders’ class. This gave a strong indication that some charities do have a consistent strategy when using Twitter, and some very rarely deviate from this. The remaining charities shown much more varied use over the 30 weeks, suggesting a less coherent strategy.

### 8.1.6 Classification Discussion

The development of this classification system has shown that there are certain clearly distinguishable communication styles on Twitter. While this has been developed using charitable organisations, it is expected that these profiles could be applied to any organisation. Three primary approaches were detected using the typological analysis: responding, gifting and mixing. This supports the idea that due to the huge range in types of charity, and types of aim for social media, there would be different styles of communication adopted by each. This reflects some of the differences found in the literature, such as [Auger \(2013\)](#) and [Fussell Sisco and McCorkindale \(2013\)](#), which suggest that specific groups prefer particular types of communication—showing that there is no single approach to using Twitter that can be assumed when developing analytical processes.

Using the automated classifier over the 30-week period showed that some charities are committed to particular types of communication. When a dedicated strategy is apparent like this, it is feasible that appropriate measures can be applied to discover some of the results of these dialogues. By itself, this analysis goes above and beyond what is currently offered by existing free analytical tools by providing contextualised feedback as to whether or not a charity’s strategy matches their intended aims for social media.

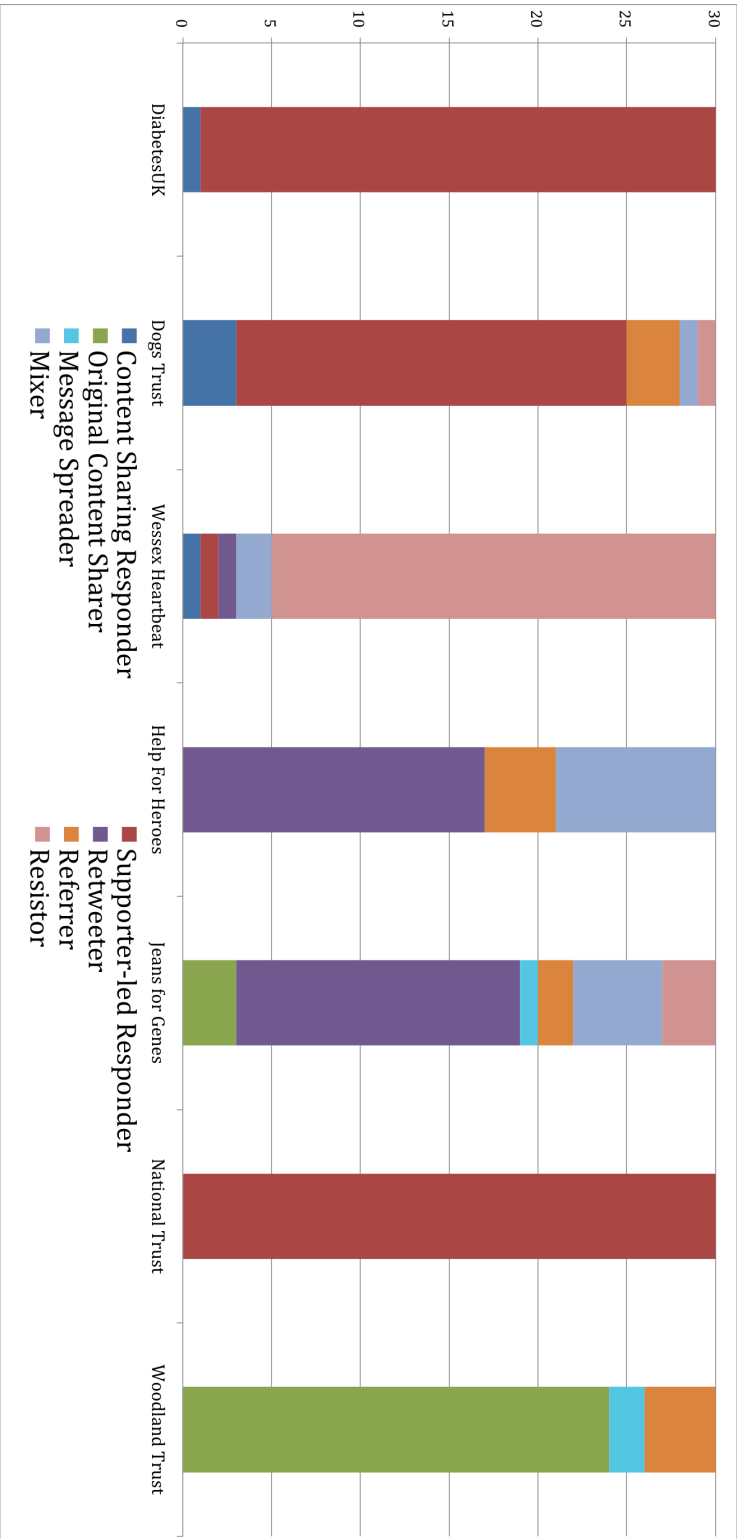


Figure 8.8: Weekly communication profiles for 7 charities over the course of 30 weeks

The largest category apparent from the sampled charities used to create this classification was the resistors, or those charities that did not appear to be heavily utilising Twitter. The restrictions to avoid being placed in this category meant that a charity either had to show on average at least 2 messages per day (new tweets or replies) to indicate some form of conversation, or 1 retweet per day to show an awareness of the peripheral conversation. It is surprising, given these fairly low limits, that a high number of charities from this sample of ‘large’ charitable brands were assigned to this category. Other popular categories were original content sharers (majority new tweets) and referrers (no majority but regular use of URLs in new tweets). This suggests that broadcasting information and referring users to other sites are popular strategies employed within the charitable sector. Most charities did appear to favour one of the strategies, with the mixers category—which was designed so that it catches any charity which has not fulfilled the requirements of any other category—the smallest of all with only 8 charities. This suggests that it is rare for a charity—given that they are not a resistor—not to have some form of focused strategy.

The approach used to develop the typology—typological analysis—offered advantages for this work. Using initial categories based on proportions of tweet types allowed the categories to be broken down further based on the trends in statistics observed. A process such as K-means clustering would have required a pre-determined number of categories to group into, and therefore would not have offered this flexibility. Using the statistical approach means that this process can be reproduced easily to allow any organisation to utilise it, and can be seen as an important step in allowing an organisation to assess the value of social media to their organisation—while it is not measuring the responses to their own communication, it can provide an indication of how closely they are aligning with their own strategy, which is important to ensure that the value output that they obtain matches the effort they put in.

#### **8.1.6.1 Limitations**

One of the main limitations of this classification system is that charities cannot overlap classes—they will always be assigned to one or the other. This may hide certain aspects of a communication strategy, but nonetheless will capture the most dominant aspect of it. Additionally, this method does not analyse what the audience is tweeting in response, and so only captures one side of the social media interaction process. Furthermore, it does not look at the content of messages, but instead provides a simpler approach using statistical analysis in order to make a process that can be automated and replicated easily.



## 8.2 Conversation Chain Analysis on Facebook and Twitter

As has been discussed throughout this thesis, social media are viewed as being effective to various degrees for numerous different strategies, be they spreading awareness, directing users elsewhere, generating ‘buzz’ and developing relationships. However the classification system discussed in the previous section suggests that the way in which these sites are used may not always be suitable in order to achieve some of these aims. The literature reviewed earlier also suggests that the proportion of any online community that is actually engaging in response to what an organisation does do is low, so the majority of users take on the role of lurker or listener. As such, a study was carried out in order to seek evidence for developed relationships on social media—building on the earlier interview findings that suggested building relationships was a key aim—to determine the extent to which this is actually observable. In order to show this phenomenon across more than one individual site, two social media platforms—Facebook and Twitter—were compared.

### 8.2.1 Background

Earlier, in Section 3.1.1, the background literature around how comments and replies can represent engagement on social media through the means of conversation was discussed. Comments were more likely to occur on Facebook if the organisation in question used two-way conversational techniques (Choi et al., 2014). On Twitter, however, Waters and Jamal (2011) found that nonprofits in the USA were focusing on sending one-way messages with the intention of broadcasting information, which suggests that the techniques used on this site may not be as suitable for establishing meaningful conversation that could develop a relationship with supporters. Jo and Kim (2003) suggest a link between interactivity and relationship development on the Web, indicating the importance of showing engagement from both sides—indeed a lack of interactivity could even turn potential supporters away (Waters et al., 2009). Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013) found that “requests and suggestions”, “expressing affect” and “sharing” are all prominent intentions for participation on Facebook, which shows that textual comments play a key role in the interactivity of users. The authors also emphasised the need to encourage users to overcome opting for the “safest” options—or those that do not provoke reactions from other members, for example liking—and to improve levels of interactivity (Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013).

### 8.2.2 Approach

Based on the background discussed above, and the general theme presented in this thesis around engagement on social media, it was planned to use replies and mentions (for

Twitter) and comments (on Facebook)—the textual forms of interaction—to represent engagement leading towards a developed relationship. While other interactions such as likes, shares and retweets are recognised as offering engagement through other forms and are not disregarded, the conversational aspects of engagement are focused upon at this point to highlight the prevalence of bi-directional communication. A number of specific questions were investigated:

1. Does either Twitter or Facebook show evidence of more conversations between supporters and charity?
2. Do posts by a charity on either Twitter or Facebook tend to generate more engagement than on the other?
3. Do certain types of post by a charity on either site tend to generate more or longer conversations with the audience?

These questions sought to discover the extent to which conversations occurred on the two sites, and the differences between them. This offers insights into whether the levels of engagement on social media meet some of the common assumptions around its use for interactivity, and the perceived benefits that the charities themselves may believe they are obtaining. In order to succeed with this, it was necessary to identify whether users who commented on charity's posts did so once, or numerous times over a period of time. Returning users could be claimed to be more engaged with the charity, and therefore a stronger relationship may exist between them. As such, for each network, data was collected on conversations—relating to the initial starting post (root post) and the responses to it—and commenters, as detailed in Table 8.6. The 7 charity sample used for the 30-week analysis in Section 8.1 was reused for this analysis, containing Twitter data on Diabetes UK (DUK), the Dogs Trust (DT), Help for Heroes (HfH), Jeans for Genes (JfG), The Woodland Trust (WT), Wessex Heartbeat (WH) and The National Trust (NT), so this meant that phenomena around the same charities could be observed across studies in the triangulation process later. For Facebook, a dataset covering the same period (June–December 2013) was collected for the same charities retrospectively using a combination of the Facebook Graph API and Facebook FQL (Facebook Query Language). This contained every post and resulting comment made on the charity's page. The Twitter data consisted of any tweet sent by the charity, to the charity or mentioning the charity. Scripts were then written in the Python programming language to process each of the fourteen datasets in turn, and extract the relevant data for conversations and participants. While this was trivial for Facebook posts as it simply required the collection and analysis of a list of comments in response to a post, it was more complex for Twitter where typically the work had to be carried out in reverse and so a process based on the work of [Cogan et al. \(2012\)](#)—who devised algorithms for finding a conversation roots and the chain of subsequent replies—was produced to form tweets into conversation chains.

| Data Category | Variables  |
|---------------|--|
| Conversations | Root Post ID, Root Post Format, Chain Length, Number of Participants, Charity Started?, Charity Replied? |
| Commenters    | User ID, Number of posts made, Number of conversations involved in.                                      |

Table 8.6: Summary of data variables

Each user was recorded as well, along with how many posts they made in the 30-week period, and how many conversations these fell in to. To allow proportional calculations to be carried out, the number of followers (on Twitter, as of 5th February 2014) and page likes (for Facebook, as of 4th February 2014) were collected. A summary of the dataset is presented in Table 8.7. 493328 posts were collected, coming from 201699 different users (assuming each user only posted to one of the 7 charities—the actual unique value may be lower).

In addition, some qualitative analysis was carried out. For each charity—and on each network—the text of the top 5 commented on posts were extracted. Content analysis was carried out upon these messages so that particular themes could be elicited to see if any appeared to cause higher levels of conversation. This was planned as a way of assisting the recommendations to charities about the types of content that can produce the most desirable results for particular strategies, thus increasing the value output of their social media work.

### 8.2.3 Results

The data gathered on conversation chains and participants was analysed using statistical tests. The following sections outline the results of the three questions outlined in the previous section.

#### 8.2.3.1 Evidence of Supporters Participating in Conversations on Facebook and Twitter

In order to examine how commenters behaved on each site, it was necessary to assess the number of posts that each user made. These figures are displayed in Table 8.8. A Wilcoxon signed-rank test was carried out on this data to determine whether one site produced significantly higher values, with Twitter shown to be higher ( $z=-2.366$ ,  $p<0.05$ ,  $r=-0.63$ ). Non-parametric tests were favoured as a low number of values were being examined, and therefore assumptions over their distribution could not be made. Additionally, the number of users who commented more than once (the repeat engagers)

| Charity | Facebook Data |                      |           |            | Twitter Data |                       |            |            |
|---------|---------------|----------------------|-----------|------------|--------------|-----------------------|------------|------------|
|         | Likes         | Charity's Root Posts | All Posts | Commenters | Followers    | Charity's Root Tweets | All Tweets | Mentioners |
| DUK     | 57834         | 135                  | 8602      | 3012       | 76808        | 820                   | 36504      | 11472      |
| DT      | 583569        | 451                  | 35662     | 12787      | 115687       | 1249                  | 49873      | 21083      |
| WH      | 529           | 76                   | 51        | 27         | 586          | 424                   | 845        | 179        |
| HfH     | 324490        | 269                  | 12487     | 7371       | 224259       | 2901                  | 169891     | 82154      |
| JfG     | 4973          | 252                  | 879       | 495        | 12045        | 3818                  | 39563      | 17104      |
| NT      | 144701        | 311                  | 24606     | 8144       | 210241       | 763                   | 90792      | 27040      |
| WT      | 40067         | 142                  | 5620      | 2941       | 48449        | 1227                  | 17953      | 7890       |

Table 8.7: Data overview

| Charity | Average Posts Per Commenter (FB) | Average Posts Per Commenter (TW) |
|---------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| DUK     | 2.66904                          | 2.98087                          |
| DT      | 2.27573                          | 2.33973                          |
| WH      | 1.82853                          | 4.90465                          |
| HfH     | 1.65227                          | 2.04518                          |
| JfG     | 1.72773                          | 3.19667                          |
| NT      | 2.51088                          | 3.19667                          |
| WT      | 1.86335                          | 2.26464                          |

Table 8.8: Commenter Statistics

| Charity | Repeat Engagers |                  | Monthly Engagers |             |
|---------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|-------------|
|         | FB              | TW               | FB               | TW          |
| DUK     | 1159<br>(38.5%) | 4134 (36%)       | 207 (6.9%)       | 1000 (8.7%) |
| DT      | 5091<br>(32.2%) | 6182<br>(29.3%)  | 884 (5.6%)       | 1152 (5.5%) |
| WH      | 10 (37.0%)      | 59 (33%)         | 2 (7.4%)         | 14 (7.8%)   |
| HfH     | 1894<br>(25.7%) | 16922<br>(20.6%) | 180 (2.4%)       | 3308 (4%)   |
| JfG     | 130 (26.3%)     | 4637<br>(27.1%)  | 10 (2%)          | 769 (4.5%)  |
| NT      | 2896<br>(35.6%) | 9904<br>(36.6%)  | 545 (6.7%)       | 2205 (8.2%) |
| WT      | 916 (31.1%)     | 2462<br>(31.2%)  | 129 (4.4%)       | 427 (5.4%)  |

Table 8.9: Repeated Engager Statistics (out of supporters who have commented at least once)

and 6 or more times (on average one post per month for each of the 6 months) were calculated (Table 8.9). While the monthly observer values do not necessarily mean that one post was made in each of the 6 months, it gives an indication of how many of the users posted a higher number of comments. These values were used for another Wilcoxon signed-rank test, which showed that, again, there was a difference in favour of Twitter ( $z=-2.197$ ,  $p<0.05$ ,  $r=-0.59$ ), although when the same test was used for the repeat engagers, there was no significant difference recorded ( $z=-1.352$ ,  $p>0.05$ ,  $r=-0.36$ ). Overall, however, these results suggest that each supporter who interacts on Twitter does

so more regularly, or more frequently, than those who interact on Facebook.

To further investigate this first question, an ‘engagement index’ was created for each charity (Table 8.10). For Facebook, this consisted of the average of Z-scores for the number of commenters per likes of the charity’s page ( $M=0.055$ ,  $SD=0.026$ ), the average number of conversations each user participated in ( $M=1.776$ ,  $SD=0.258$ ), and the average number of posts made by each user per conversation ( $M=1.163$ ,  $SD=0.084$ ). Similar values were used for Twitter: the number of posters per followers of the charity’s account ( $M=0.388$ ,  $SD=0.464$ ), the average number of conversations participated in ( $M=2.668$ ,  $SD=0.818$ ), and the average number of tweets made by each user in each conversation ( $M=1.062$ ,  $SD=0.050$ ). A Z-score was created for each charity’s value in relation to these averages, with an overall average used to produce an index for each site. A Spearman correlation test was used to determine whether or not charities with more engaged users on one site had more engaged users on the other, but no significant correlation was detected ( $r=0.321$ ,  $p=0.482$ ).

#### 8.2.4 Engagement in Response to Charities’ Posts

Whereas the above section focused on the data about the supporters, this section instead looks at the *posts* made by the charities themselves in order to determine how the audience responded to them. The primary statistic for this was the number of comments (on Facebook) or replies (Twitter) per charity-authored post. Again, a Wilcoxon signed-rank test was carried out on the results to examine the trend in differences between each case across the two networks. Firstly this was calculated on the average number of comments per post per like (or follower). Interestingly, this showed that Facebook was consistently higher ( $z=-2.366$ ,  $p<0.05$ ,  $r=-0.63$ ), suggesting that for each supporter on the two sites, posts by the charities on Facebook received a higher number of comments or replies (Table 8.11).

Secondly, looking at the average number of *commenters* or ‘interacting supporters’ per like or follower on each site (Table 8.11), Facebook again came out consistently higher ( $z=-2.366$ ,  $p<0.05$ ,  $r=-0.63$ ). This suggests a higher proportion of the supporter base on Facebook was observed to have interacted within the 6-month period than on Twitter. This is an interesting contrast to the analysis in Section 8.2.3.1 which suggested that each interacting supporter on Twitter carried out actions of engagement more frequently than those on Facebook.

For the final test of engagement in response to the charity, a Spearman correlation test was used as an unsophisticated analysis of the timestamps that detailed when the charity had posted, and when their audience had posted. This was performed on a day-by-day basis within the 6-month period—for each day the number of posts made by each side was counted—with the resulting list of data run through the correlation test.

| Charity | Commenters<br>/ Likes     | Z(Commenters<br>/ Likes)     | Avg. Con-<br>versations | Z(Avg.<br>Convos) | Avg. Posts<br>/ Conversa-<br>tion  | Z(Avg.<br>Posts /<br>Conversa-<br>tion)  | FB<br>Engagement<br>Index |
|---------|---------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| DUK     | 0.05                      | -0.10                        | 2.03                    | 0.97              | 1.32                               | 1.84                                     | 0.91                      |
| DT      | 0.03                      | -1.04                        | 2.08                    | 1.17              | 1.09                               | -0.81                                    | -0.23                     |
| WH      | 0.05                      | -0.13                        | 1.59                    | -0.71             | 1.15                               | -0.17                                    | -0.34                     |
| HfH     | 0.02                      | -1.21                        | 1.52                    | -1.01             | 1.09                               | -0.87                                    | -1.03                     |
| JfG     | 0.10                      | 1.71                         | 1.52                    | -1.01             | 1.14                               | -0.29                                    | 0.14                      |
| NT      | 0.06                      | 0.06                         | 2.03                    | 0.99              | 1.24                               | 0.87                                     | 0.64                      |
| WT      | 0.07                      | 0.71                         | 1.67                    | -0.41             | 1.11                               | -0.57                                    | -0.09                     |
|         | Commenters<br>/ Followers | Z(Commenters<br>/ Followers) | Avg. Con-<br>versations | Z(Avg.<br>Convos) | Avg. Tweets<br>/ Conversa-<br>tion | Z(Avg.<br>Tweets /<br>Conversa-<br>tion) | Tw<br>Engagement<br>Index |
| DUK     | 0.15                      | -0.51                        | 2.72                    | 0.06              | 1.10                               | 0.66                                     | 0.07                      |
| DT      | 0.18                      | -0.44                        | 2.25                    | -0.52             | 1.04                               | -0.40                                    | -0.45                     |
| WH      | 0.31                      | -0.18                        | 4.40                    | 2.12              | 1.11                               | 1.03                                     | 0.99                      |
| HfH     | 0.37                      | -0.05                        | 2.03                    | -0.79             | 1.01                               | -1.04                                    | -0.62                     |
| JfG     | 1.42                      | 2.23                         | 2.24                    | -0.52             | 1.02                               | -0.84                                    | 0.29                      |
| NT      | 0.13                      | -0.56                        | 2.82                    | 0.19              | 1.13                               | 1.38                                     | 0.34                      |
| WT      | 0.16                      | -0.49                        | 2.22                    | -0.55             | 1.02                               | -0.80                                    | -0.61                     |

Table 8.10: Engagement Indexes for each charity on the two networks

|         | Average Comments<br>Per Post Per<br>Supporter |         | Average Responders<br>Per Post Per<br>Supporter |         |
|---------|---|---------|---|---------|
| Charity | FB  | TW      | FB  | TW      |
| DUK     | 0.00055                                       | 0.0005  | 0.00042   | 0.00002 |
| DT      | 0.00010                                       | 0.00001 | 0.00009   | 0.00001 |
| WH      | 0.00077                                       | 0.00029 | 0.00062   | 0.00021 |
| HfH     | 0.00010                                       | 0.00000 | 0.00009   | 0.00000 |
| JfG     | 0.00050                                       | 0.00002 | 0.00042   | 0.00001 |
| NT      | 0.00033                                       | 0.00003 | 0.00022   | 0.00001 |
| WT      | 0.00138                                       | 0.00002 | 0.00126   | 0.00002 |

Table 8.11: Post Response Statistics (out of all supporters (likes or followers))

Table 8.12 shows the overall results for each charity, and suggests in all cases that there is a significant correlation between days in which the charity posts, and days when the audience posts. Despite this, the variation in the strengths of these correlations shows that this is not the only variable having an effect, and so many comments may well be made in an ‘unsolicited’ way, rather than always responding to what the charity is doing. Using a Wilcoxon signed-rank test to determine the differences between the two sites for this revealed that there was no significant difference between the strengths in correlation on each site ( $z=-0.338$ ,  $p>0.05$ ,  $r=-0.09$ ).

### 8.2.5 Effect of Post Type on Responses to Charities’ Posts

In order to establish the influence of what *type* of post the charity makes in terms of the engagement received in response, the number of each type of post was counted (statuses, pictures, videos and links). Separating each dataset into these groups meant that calculations could be carried out to determine the differences in engagement for each. The results for the average number of comments per post (FB:  $M=26.806$ ,  $SD=12.012$ , TW:  $M=1.496$ ,  $SD=0.873$ ) and the average number of commenters per post (FB:  $M=23.020$ ,  $SD=10.406$ , TW:  $M=0.966$ ,  $SD=0.571$ ) are displayed in Table 8.13. This table also shows an index for the response level for each format, calculated using Z-score of the comments per post and commenters per post values—although as on Twitter no posts were labelled as ‘videos’ this was excluded from the calculation for that site. Posts including images appeared to be the most engaging on both sites, with higher numbers of comments and



| Charity | FB Correlation     | TW Correlation     |
|---------|--------------------|--------------------|
| DUK     | $r=0.643$ $p<0.01$ | $r=0.6$ $p<0.01$   |
| DT      | $r=0.413$ $p<0.01$ | $r=0.718$ $p<0.01$ |
| WH      | $r=0.341$ $p<0.01$ | $r=0.269$ $p<0.01$ |
| HfH     | $r=0.522$ $p<0.01$ | $r=0.302$ $p<0.01$ |
| JfG     | $r=0.54$ $p<0.01$  | $r=0.662$ $p<0.01$ |
| NT      | $r=0.541$ $p<0.01$ | $r=0.53$ $p<0.01$  |
| WT      | $r=0.666$ $p<0.01$ | $r=0.621$ $p<0.01$ |

Table 8.12: Charity and Supporter Post Date Correlation

| Format   | FB Com-<br>ments /<br>Posts | FB Com-<br>menters /<br>Posts | FB<br>Response<br>Index | TW<br>Replies /<br>Posts | TW<br>Repliers /<br>Posts | TW<br>Response<br>Index |
|----------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Statuses | 23.68                       | 19.71                         | -0.289                  | 0.64                     | 0.423                     | -0.966                  |
| Videos   | 24.43                       | 21.69                         | -0.163                  | N/A                      | N/A                       | N/A                     |
| Pictures | 43.74                       | 37.62                         | 1.406                   | 2.38                     | 1.56                      | 1.030                   |
| Links    | 15.36                       | 13.07                         | -0.954                  | 1.46                     | 0.91                      | -0.065                  |

Table 8.13: Post Format Responses

commenters than any other format. However while the overall results were the same between the two sites, the scale in which they varied was large: on Facebook a picture received an average of over 37 unique commenters, whereas on Twitter this was just 1.56.

### 8.2.6 Top Post Content Analysis

The five most commented upon posts by each charity on each network were analysed qualitatively in order to assess whether there were any themes regarding the content of popular messages. A codebook—available with notes and explanations in Appendix H—was used to manually categorise the message text with the results shown in Table 8.14. Several recurring types of messages were discovered in the sample. For Facebook, informal questions appeared to be the most common, making up 12/35 posts. Competition promotion (10/35 posts) was also popular. 7 of the posts directly referred to a picture included in the post, which as discussed above, were typically the most engaging posts. Informational messages—including the various subcategories of this—made up 21 of the

| Code    | Description   | FB Freq | TW Freq |
|---------|---|---------|---------|
| 1       | Informational message                                 | 5       | 1       |
| 1.1     | Link to relevant content                              | 0       | 2       |
| 1.1.1   | Link to charity's own site                            | 6       | 1       |
| 1.1.2   | Link to another site                                  | 2       | 0       |
| 1.2     | Related to a current campaign                         | 2       | 1       |
| 1.3     | Reporting an update on relevant work                  | 1       | 1       |
| 1.3.1   | Positive  | 2       | 2       |
| 1.3.1.1 | Tankful for supporters' help                          | 2       | 1       |
| 1.3.2   | Negative  | 0       | 1       |
| 1.4     | Reporting media attention                             | 1       | 2       |
| 1.5     | Reporting celebratory attention                       | 0       | 2       |
|         | Total Informational Messages                          | 21      | 14      |
| 2       | Topical message relating to the news                  | 1       | 1       |
| 3       | Seasonal message relating to calendar event           | 1       | 2       |
| 4       | Informal question to supporters                       | 12      | 16      |
| 5       | Requesting help from supporters                       | 0       | 1       |
| 5.1     | Donations (financial)                                 | 1       | 1       |
| 5.2     | Donations (other)                                     | 0       | 1       |
| 5.3     | Related action (e.g. rehoming, petition signing etc.) | 4       | 1       |
| 6       | Directly referring to media content                   | 0       | 0       |
| 6.1     | Picture   | 7       | 5       |
| 6.2     | Video   | 0       | 0       |
| 7       | Advertising a product                                 | 3       | 0       |
| 8       | Promoting a competition                               | 10      | 4       |
| 9       | Tone  | 0       | 0       |
| 9.1     | Formal  | 0       | 0       |
| 9.1.1   | Serious   | 2       | 0       |
| 9.2     | Informal  | 9       | 6       |
| 9.2.1   | Humorous  | 1       | 0       |
| 9.3     | Emotive   | 2       | 0       |
| 9.4     | Authoritative   | 1       | 0       |
| 10      | General thanks to supporters                          | 2       | 4       |
| 11      | Press Release   | 1       | 0       |

Table 8.14: Top post content themes

35 posts, indicating that the sharing of information was extremely important. The tone of messages in general was more informal (10/35) than formal or authoritative (3/35, combined).

On Twitter, the informal question category was again popular with 16/35 posts falling into this category. Informational messages were also popular with 14/35 posts in total. Promoting a competition was less common than on Facebook (4/35), and there were a small number of general messages of thanks (4/35) that was higher on this network. In two cases, on both sites, informal questions made up the majority of popular posts by the charities in question (one with 5/5 on both Facebook and Twitter, and the other 4/5 on each), while a third charity frequently promoted competitions with 3/5 on Facebook and

4/5 on Twitter being this type of post. There are strong indications from this analysis that informal questions and informational messages are particularly effective—along with posts including pictures as discussed above—at generating responses from the supporter base.

### 8.2.7 Discussion

The work covered in this section aimed to examine the prevalence of social media based conversations as a way of establishing the extent to which supporters engaged with charities on these platforms. It is interesting to note that both sites appear to harbour conversations that could represent engagement or developed relationships, but in contrasting ways. Twitter appeared to generate more interactions per interacting supporter than Facebook, suggesting that users were more engaged. However when looking at the data from the point of view of the posts—and the conversation chains in response to them—Facebook posts received more comments, and commenters than Twitter in relation to the number of supporters each charity possessed on each network. This disparity could arise due to the way in which data was collected, which differed slightly between the two sites. On Twitter, the Search API allowed any messages *mentioning* the charity to be collected, while on Facebook the data was restricted to what appeared on the charity's page, and therefore the amount of observable interacting users is different. The data around the responses to charities' posts is unaffected by this as it only analyses the chains that form from their own posts anyway. What this does imply, however, is that as the publicity of conversations could be seen as a huge advantage to a brand on social media, there is a great opportunity on Twitter to discover additional, unsolicited 'satellite' discussions about the organisation, which they can then locate, respond to and promote as desired.

As supporters who do interact appear to interact more often on Twitter, it is surprising that the values in Tables 8.11 and 8.13—relating to the responses to charities' posts—are so much smaller than those for Facebook. Returning to the literature discussed earlier in this thesis, it is possible that this could be down to the 'wrong' types of message being sent—Waters and Jamal (2011) and Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) both suggest that one-way broadcast messages are frequently utilised, rather than those which foster conversation. However the qualitative content analysis has shown that asking informal questions—and therefore seeking to gain a response from supporters—were popular types of message on Twitter that received some of the highest levels of interaction, and so high amounts of engagement are clearly possible on the site. Alternatively, this difference could be down to the differing ways that Twitter and Facebook are viewed by charities—if they are not aiming to engage supporters through Twitter then these results should be expected. As pictures were shown in this study to be the most responded

to post format—supporting work referred to from the literature by Cvijikj and Michalhes (2011)—it is interesting to note that while 76% of all posts on Facebook were this format, less than 14% of charities’ posts on Twitter included images. This may change as Twitter have recently modified their site so that pictures are displayed automatically in a user’s timeline—potentially increasing their appeal and resulting engagement—and therefore acknowledging changes to social network sites is a vital step for charities in order to ensure their strategies remain up-to-date in a fast-changing and ever-evolving environment.

One of the startling revelations of these results is how few people do actually comment at all, in comparison to the number of supporters each charity has (Table 8.7) and then how these proportions tail off quickly when repeat engagers and then monthly engagers are counted within this (Table 8.9). This was expected to some extent, following the literature review on lurkers and listeners earlier, but reveals how few people demonstrate this method of engagement. It must also be acknowledged that other measures—such as likes and retweets—were not used for this analysis, and therefore the entire picture of engagement was not revealed. However in terms of conversations—the elements of social media that produce rich, textual data for feedback and expression of interest—there is clearly only a small group of ‘core’ engaged supporters. On the other hand, these have been shown to be able to create a considerably sized amount of conversation on both of the sites, and locating these users—using techniques such as those used in this analysis—can help to promote their individual contributions and generate further buzz around the charity.

### 8.3 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has presented two statistically-based pieces of analysis of social media engagement to demonstrate what can be measured and determined with the data obtainable directly from social media sites themselves. The two sections have each covered a different side of social media interaction: firstly the communication styles of charities were analysed to showcase how differently charities can adopt these sites, and how different the results could then turn out to be. This indicates the potential for analytic methods that go beyond generic measurements of activity, and are instead grounded and related to what the organisation in question is actually trying to achieve. To complement this, the second section has analysed the engagement in response to charities’ posts by looking at conversation chains that develop on social media sites. By comparing Facebook and Twitter, this provides important understanding regarding the differences in engagement on these sites, and could be used to highlight where particular sites offer certain advantages for some strategies.



## Chapter 9

# Overall Discussion and Conclusions

“Try not to become a man of success, but rather try to become a man of value.”

— Albert Einstein

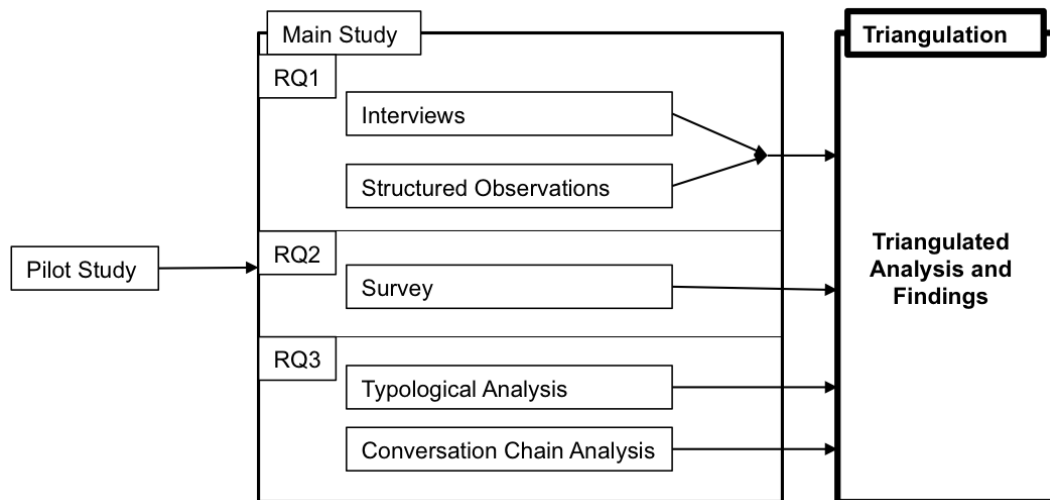


Figure 9.1: Overall research design

This chapter presents the final discussions and conclusions based on the data collected and analysed in the preceding chapters. To recap the work that has been carried out, a summary of each study will first be presented. The collection of findings will then be triangulated and analysed to gain a more thorough understanding of the overall value of social media to charities. A discussion of these results follows, before the limitations and future work opportunities are presented, and then final conclusions are made.

## 9.1 Results Recap

This thesis has presented a number of studies into the value of social media for charities. Following on from the pilot study, which proposed the AEA model of social media ‘outcomes’ and showed that there were indications that charities were focusing on different elements of this with differing levels of intensity, an investigation was carried out to assess various elements of this process. To understand the value to the organisation, different perspectives were analysed: what the charity wanted to achieve, and why they were using social media; how supporters wanted to interact with charities, and what role social media played in this; and what indications of engagement were present on social media to indicate that the views and desires of each side are being fulfilled.

### 9.1.1 Interviews and Structured Observations

The triangulation of semi-structured interviews and structured observations led to a number of findings regarding the motivations behind why charities use social media. The primary output was a breakdown of aims or strategies that charities have for social media: relationship building, generating referral traffic, mobilisation and lastly—as a side-effect of the others—fundraising. Furthermore, these aims varied between social media sites—Facebook appeared to be favoured for relationship building, while Twitter was used less for engagement and instead was preferred for creating awareness and driving traffic to other websites. A further theme that emerged was that pictures were particularly engaging and led to higher amounts of interaction than other content, but in general the charities appeared to have trouble in determining social media’s value due to the difficulty of tracking online activity through to offline action.

### 9.1.2 Survey

The survey revealed a number of insights into how a sample of supporters felt about interacting with charities on social media. Supporters indicated that social media was the most important channel for staying informed about a charity’s latest work, yet it was not perceived as an influential factor in making them then go on to act in support. However, it was listed as the channel through which supporters received the most frequent updates, which indicates a potentially valuable, but subtle, method of influence regarding this. Again, however, for communicating with the charity, social media was not seen as a primary method, and while many respondents felt that being part of a charitable community was important, there were many who didn’t feel involved—and when they were, traditional actions of support appeared more popular than interacting through social media. There was also a suggestion that when supporters do interact on social media, Twitter is the preferred platform for doing so.

### 9.1.3 Social Network Analysis: Typological Analysis

Using typological analysis, a classification of charities' communication styles on Twitter was created. This process elicited eight different communication 'styles' that were observed to have been utilised, falling under three broad categories of responding, gifting and mixing. The implications of this are that it allows the strategy of an organisation to be compared to their behaviour to determine whether or not it will help to achieve the goal, and therefore can increase awareness regarding the areas in which the charity can improve the value output of their social media work. Analysis around the classification showed that the largest category was the resisters, or those that did not post on Twitter regularly, which suggested a lack of utilisation from these organisations. Other popular types of behaviour were to share new content and regularly send URL links. Furthermore it appeared that some charities use extremely consistent strategies over long periods of time, which suggests that in these cases it is even more imperative to ensure that they are working towards their intended outcomes.

### 9.1.4 Social Network Analysis: Conversation Chains

Analysis into the textual responses to charities' posts on Facebook and Twitter revealed further interesting findings. While Twitter appeared to harbour more engaged supporters—where supporters who did interact did so more often over a period of time—it was Facebook that received more comments, from a higher number of commenters in response to charities' posts. This disparity could suggest areas in which the two networks facilitate different forms and levels of engagement, which charities should understand before developing strategies for each. Furthermore posts containing images were the most engaging across both sites, although a far higher proportion of posts were found to contain these on Facebook, with relatively low utilisation on Twitter. Finally, it was remarkable how few supporters showed engagement through textual-based interactions over the 30 week period, demonstrating how important the 'lurker' or 'listener' communities are on social media.

## 9.2 Triangulation of Findings

In line with the methodology designed in Chapter 4, the various strands of this research were then pulled together through triangulation to produce the final research outputs. This is broken down around a number of key areas or themes that were elicited from the research process, which are each discussed below.



### 9.2.1 Uses and Aims For Social Media in a Multi-Channel Environment

The contrasting nature of the interviews and surveys meant that comparisons between the charities' aims and the supporters' desires could be made. It is clear the charities do not have a single aim when using social media; rather they see various avenues that could be sought and these can produce very different outcomes. Perhaps the most surprising finding was that fundraising was not seen as a priority, and often this was only seen as a positive consequence of succeeding with the other outcomes such as relationship building or mobilisation. Spreading awareness, and generating engagement were both important elements of the overall strategies of charities on social media, and these platforms were seen as ideal for helping to elicit them. By profiling the communication styles that charities used on Twitter, it is also possible to observe the methods by which the charities go about attempting to complete these strategies. It was observed that (other than the resistor category), the most common behaviours seemed to be broadcasting information and referring users to other sites, suggesting that on Twitter there was a large element of awareness spreading. Crucially, using such a profiling system could allow charities to realise when their behaviour needs adapting in order to perform better at a particular aim—as the aims are varied it may be necessary to switch between them regularly, which may require different communicative approaches.

However, the supporters had different views: while they saw social media as the most important channel available for staying up-to-date with the charities' work, there appeared to be far less of an indication that they believed it to be a platform for engagement that could help to build relationships. This underlines an important difference in the views regarding social media's use: large numbers of supporters did not see social media as a channel for contact or communication to the extent they did for finding out information, yet this appeared to be one of the key areas charities wanted to push in order to build relationships. This is illustrated in Figure 7.16 where the relative use of 'engagement' features of social media tails off as the level of engagement increases. This may go some way to explaining why the interactive, or 'responder' categories of communication by charities on Twitter were not popular—if the audience is not conversing then it would be difficult for the charity to reply to them. Therefore it appears from this that the most valuable feature of social media to charities is the potential for spreading awareness. Supporters gained the most frequent updates about the charity through social media channels, although despite this they did not perceive it to be a large influential factor on their subsequent decisions to act. This is an area that has the potential for future study, and requires a larger, more targeted study to focus on this one aspect in order to investigate in depth. In general, however, the overall trend of this section is exemplified by two quotes from one of the interviewees:

*“On Twitter for example one of our most popular tweets ever was a very simple tweet about what to do if you see a dog in a hot car.” (Interviewee 1)*

*“Interestingly, some of the ones [appeals] that go absolutely crazy on Facebook don’t get any requests at the centre, so I’ve not yet been able to find an actual trend.” (Interviewee 1)*

This appears to summarise the issues discussed here regarding the way in which supporters view social media and charities. Messages providing information, or the latest appeals, may gain popularity on social media and help to create awareness around them. However, when it comes to engaging on them—as with the Facebook example in the quote—this does not seem to have an impact on whether or not supporters decide to act.

### **9.2.2 Perceptions on the Uses and Suitability of Individual Social Network Sites for Particular Strategies**

Building on the previous section, the focus now switches to how different social network sites were used and perceived by both sides, with the focus on the difference between Facebook and Twitter. These sites were consistently referred to as being the most important in the background literature, interviews and survey results, and so they form a worthwhile comparison given their different structures and features. The interviewees suggested that Facebook was favoured for relationship building and more in-depth conversations, whereas the focus for Twitter was on generating awareness and driving referral traffic back to a website:

*“Twitter is very much trying to drive traffic back to the website, so Facebook we try and keep maintained conversations on Facebook itself.” (Interviewee 5)*

However, in contrast to this, there were more survey respondents who claimed that they regularly interacted with a charity on Twitter than there were who did the same on Facebook. More people used Facebook to connect to charities, and so these results suggest the opposite to what the charities believed was occurring. Furthermore, the conversation chain analysis showed some interesting findings. While Twitter appeared to generate less engagement in terms of responses (both number of message, and users sending them) to their own posts, those users who did interact tended to do so more often over a six month period. This suggests that the improved performance for conversations and relationship building that charities think is occurring on Facebook is likely to come from increased numbers of single comments from a higher number of supporters, whereas on Twitter a small proportion is likely to interact but with more chance of doing so repeatedly. This finding is particularly interesting in terms of differentiating the value of different social media sites, especially as it demonstrates an apparent lack of understanding in this area by the charities themselves.

### 9.2.3 Indications of Where Social Media is Successful

The suggestions of social media ‘success’ have been varied from the numerous methods used to collect data in this thesis. The charity interviewees were cautious about declaring the use of social media as something they drew tangible benefits from, but there was still the indication that they believed it provided a specific form of added value:

*“I think social media represents a pretty unique opportunity for really immediate personal engagement—I think it’s really difficult to get in another channel.” (Interviewee 5)*

*“Social media is just like—it creates ‘talk-ability’, it creates buzz, it creates excitement, it’s just an add-on really.” (Interviewee 4)*

The lack of understanding around social media’s value was a primary motivator behind this research, and it is more complex than simply being able to quantify and present a measure of ‘success’ or ‘value’. However by continuing the theme of this thesis by investigating the issue from numerous perspectives, more insights were gained. For the supporters themselves, it was interesting to see that despite them thinking that being part of a charitable community was important, it was less common for a respondent to say they felt strongly involved in that community. This demonstrates an area where there could be potential for value to be created on social media, and suggests that charities could focus on improving the methods by which the community itself forms on social networks, rather than trying to engage supporters directly and individually. Only 25 out of the 94 respondents believed they received the benefit of community spirit by being connected to a charity, which suggests that this could be improved (Table 7.14). Encouraging community development between supporters may also be necessary as the participants did not see social media as a prioritised channel for contacting the organisation, and it was surprising to see in Figure 7.12 that the respondents carried out more ‘active’ events for the charity than they did interact on social media. The implication of this is twofold. Firstly, it would seem that supporters currently do not see interacting with charities on social media as an important element of participating in the community, and the low number of supporters shown to have engaged over a 30-week period in the conversation chain analysis demonstrates this clearly. Secondly, it suggests that concerns that social media ‘slacktivism’ may lead to an overestimation of the amount of support a campaign may have is a deeper problem that requires much further investigation.

In terms of what particular features succeeded or performed better on social media, there was a substantial argument in the favour of image-based posts. The charity employees eluded to posts containing pictures receiving more feedback than other types of post, and this was supported both by existing literature (as reported by Cvijikj and Michahelles (2011)) and in the conversation chain analysis where they were shown to have produced the largest numbers of comments in return. This again highlighted differences in the ways in which each network was used as images accounted for 76% of all Facebook posts

(by the charity), but only 14% of posts on Twitter. This could potentially change over time depending on the features of each network—for example towards the end of the data collection period Twitter introduced a change whereby pictures would be displayed by inline within a user's timeline<sup>1</sup>, potentially altering the engagement of these types of post and making them more attractive for an organisation to use. Keeping on top of changes such as these are vital for charities to ensure that they continue to make best use of each network.

The small qualitative sample that was used to examine the post content in the conversation chain analysis section also revealed that out of the most commented upon posts, informational messages and informal questions were the dominant categories on both Facebook and Twitter. This suggests that these themes are the most effective at generating conversation and responses, which again can be used by charities as they seek to fulfil particular strategies. The informational messages category is interesting as this aligns with what the supporters implied was the most valuable element of following charities on social media—finding out the latest information—so these results give some indications that focusing on these perceptions may produce the best results.

### 9.3 Developing a Value Framework For Charities on Social Media

In order to understand the overall value in using social media for charities—which was the primary research question to investigate in this thesis—it is necessary to revisit the three sub-questions that were designed in order to provide insights into this area.

The first question regarded how and why charities use social media. It has become apparent that the reasons for this are varied, and charities have different goals which in turn each require different strategies, and will ultimately produce differing types of value as a result. Four main aims were elicited: relationship building, generating referral traffic, mobilisation and fundraising, and these varied even more when compared across social network sites. Using the AEA-model devised in the pilot study, it is hard to claim that social media use focuses on any one of these stages—alternatively it is apparent that no stage is overlooked. It seems the priority is skewed more towards the 'awareness' and 'engagement' stages, however charities appear to focus on this so that the 'action' stage can be achieved as an end-result of the work being put in to fulfil the preceding steps. In order to determine the value of social media to any one particular charity, an understanding of their own needs, desires and strategies must first be taken into account. Considering the free analytic tools shown earlier in Table 8.1, it seems that

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<sup>1</sup><https://blog.twitter.com/2013/picture-this-more-visual-tweets>

the insights that these can provide to charities ‘automatically’ are limited, and an organisation requires more in-depth analysis of how their behaviour—and their audience’s responses—aligns with their own strategies.

The second question aimed to assess why supporters interacted with charities on social media. There was a strong suggestion for this that supporters primarily saw social media as a channel for awareness, and it was seen as an important medium for discovering information about the charity’s work. There was a large amount of evidence to support the views in the background literature about the majority of supporters acting as lurkers or listeners, showing that social media—despite its overall interactive and dynamic content—is probably a difficult and inaccurate source to determine engagement with a charity. It therefore seems that without additional data sources to compare with—such as donation records over time—it can be problematic to try and infer the ‘outcomes’ of a social media campaign. Interestingly a lot of the literature referred to in the background section (Section 3.2) suggested that slacktivist actions such as ‘liking’ masked the true effects of social media by over-estimating the number of devoted supporters (for example [Petray \(2011\)](#); [Rotman et al. \(2011\)](#); [Kappler and de Querol \(2011\)](#)); alternatively the survey results would appear to suggest that a lack of textual comments would mask the effects by under-estimating the number of supporters willing to help. This is clearly an unresolved issue, and highlights the difficulty of determining actual action from the levels of social media interaction.

Finally, the third question addressed the evidence available on social media itself to demonstrate whether engagement was being shown or where value was being produced. It has been shown in the sections focusing on social network analysis that this can be approached from two angles: firstly by profiling the organisation itself to assess whether what they’re doing will actually give them a chance of producing value relating to what they desire, and secondly by assessing how frequently users converse and respond to the charity using textual comments. The communication profiles for the organisation are an important tool that helps provide awareness in a sense of what the charity is doing, so that they can constantly be aware of how they can change to produce further—or different—value. The analysis of conversation chains revealed information about the small proportion of supporters who did choose to interact via comments. This has helped to provide understanding of where two social networks, Facebook and Twitter, may offer different types of value, as well as how the types of post can have an effect on the resulting feedback. Largely, this analysis reflected the same findings as RQ2—that the majority of supporters showed little interest in engaging with charities in this way. However, looking beyond this, it also demonstrates the incredible value that can be produced by the small number of supporters who *do* choose to engage. A substantial amount of conversations are held, which produces the impression of a thriving community around the charity, which supporters claimed was important to feel a part of. Simply by having a place on the Web where this is possible, for supporters to at least see that the community

exists because of these engaged members, shows that social media possesses value for these organisations by offering a ‘first point of call’ for supporters to head to and delve immediately into a community-driven charitable experience.

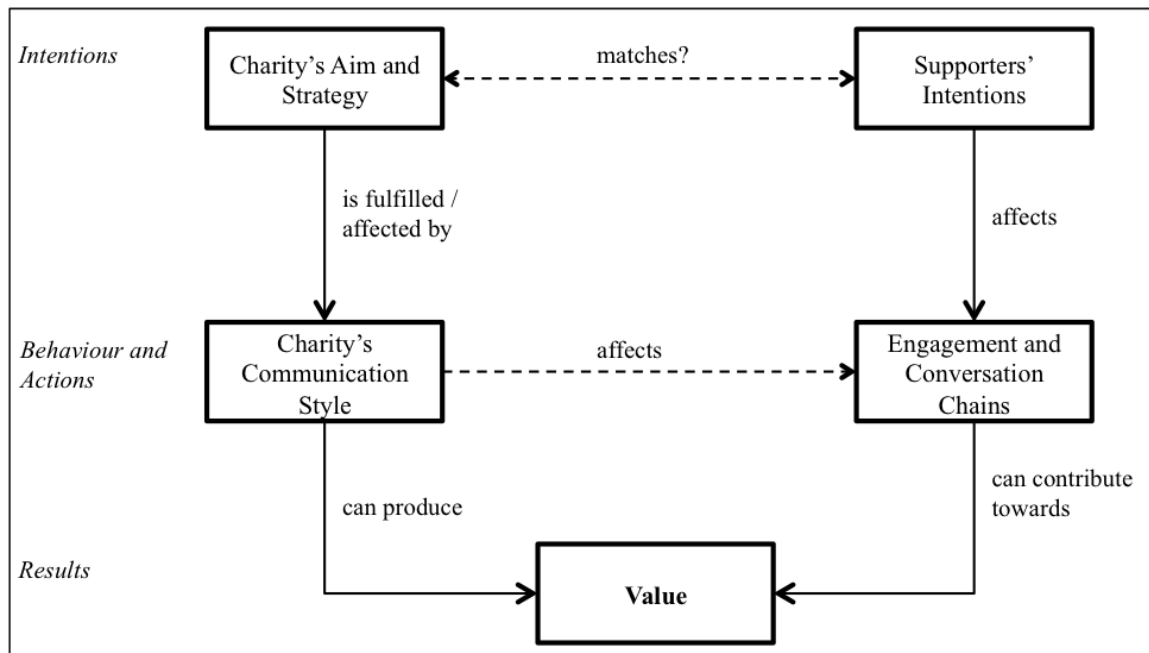


Figure 9.2: Proposed framework for establishing the possible value creation from using social media depending on both the charity's and supporters' intentions and behaviours.

Overall, it is therefore difficult to establish whether there is any specific value that can be generalised across all charities and every social media site. Instead, it is a much more complicated scenario. While it is clear that value *can* be created on social media, and appears to be done so by many charities that have been observed in this research through different means, it must be described within the context of any one particular organisation before it can be understood. As a result of the work presented in this thesis, the framework in Figure 9.2 is proposed as a way of bringing together the various strands that each play a part in determining the resulting value of social media to an organisation. There does appear to be a value mismatch between charities and the majority of their supporters, perhaps fuelled by the engagement that some supporters do show which then encourages the charity to want more from the remaining supporter-base. However there is a large amount of evidence to suggest that the majority of supporters do not see social media as a platform for engagement and therefore charities need to acknowledge that ensuring that these supporters' desires are met by providing relevant information is an equally important target. The following subsection provides more details on the framework depicted in Figure 9.2.

### 9.3.1 Value Framework

The framework in Figure 9.2 brings together the various elements of value creation that have been discussed in this thesis. These are structured around two categories: ‘intentions’ and ‘behaviour and actions’. Below is a description of how each element contributes to understanding more about social media’s value for charities.

#### Charity’s Aim and Strategy

The aim and strategy of the charity has a strong effect on the perceived value of social media as depending on what they want to achieve by using these services, the resulting value could either meet or fail to meet their expectations. This also needs to be granulated so that strategies are suitable for each network in turn—services such as Facebook produce different results to Twitter, for example. It is also important to understand these aims in order to compare them to the charity’s actual behaviour so that it can be established whether the organisation is carrying out suitable activities that will create relevant results. Referring back to the literature discussed in Section 3.4, it can be seen that precursory desires of small business adoption of social media have been focused upon before. However the two sources discussed, [Schaupp and Bélanger \(2014\)](#) and [Franklin et al. \(2014\)](#) took separate approaches: whereas [Schaupp and Bélanger \(2014\)](#) focus on the context of the organisation, such as their competence with technology and pressure from customers, [Franklin et al. \(2014\)](#) concentrate on the intended outcomes such as idea generation and relationships. As a result of the work in this thesis, it is apparent that both of these factors must be considered, and therefore this element of the framework focuses inherently on all aspects of the charity itself—what they want to achieve, their current situation, and the overall context in which they are operating.

#### Supporters’ Intentions

As with the aims of the charity discussed above, the intentions and desires of a particular charity’s audience base will have a strong influence on the resulting value created by social media services. If their willingness to engage with social media conflicts with the charity’s hope of interacting with large numbers of supporters, it may be difficult for the charity to achieve the levels of value that they desire. It is therefore important for the charity or analyst to understand both sides of this equation and produce a social media strategy that can fulfil the desires of each. When discussing social media marketing effectiveness in the background chapter (Section 3.3), the unpredictability of social media was covered, suggesting that while powerful campaigns such as the ice bucket challenge are possible, these are incredibly hard to instigate and rely primarily on the intentions of the supporters who decide to get involved.

### Charity's Communication Style

The charity's communication style can influence whether or not the organisation's aims and strategies for social media have materialised in reality and offer a chance for them to obtain the value they desire. If not, value may well still be produced but this could differ from what they initially set out to achieve. Having an awareness of the way in which the charity is communicating is important for analysing the results of a social media presence. Previous work has focused on categorising the use of particular social networks by organisations—for example [Waters and Williams \(2011\)](#) separating one-way and two-way forms of communication. One-way messages were typically found to be popular in work by [Lovejoy and Saxton \(2012\)](#), [Waters and Jamal \(2011\)](#) and [Waters and Williams \(2011\)](#), however the classification process in this thesis has revealed that there is a large amount of variation in communication 'styles' and these each need to be considered in terms of what they could produce in relation to the charity's aims, and then whether or not they appear to be doing so.

### Engagement and Conversation Chains

The engagement and communication patterns of supporters both reflects and is affected by the intentions of those supporters, as discussed above. It is also affected by the way in which the charity itself communicates and therefore could have a strong bearing on whether or not the charity meets its expectations. Observing these patterns of interaction on social media can produce the insight necessary in order to see whether the charity's strategies are working or not. However it is important to appreciate that many users—the 'listeners' as described by [Crawford \(2009\)](#)—will not show observable engagement and yet cannot be ignored when considering the value that they potentially create. Therefore the analysis of this requires an understanding of the supporters' intentions as discussed above to understand the likelihood of engagement from any one particular charity's audience.

The way in which these four sections of the value framework show consistency—or inconsistency—between the desires and behaviours of both charity and their supporters will have a large impact on the value that any one particular charity receives from social media. Claiming that there is a generic, base 'level' of value that these services produce is difficult because of the variety in contexts that charities operate within, and therefore a unique perspective is required for each organisation.

### 9.3.2 Pyramid Model of Social Media Use by Charities

Based on the findings described above, and the value framework presented in Section [9.3.1](#), a generic assessment of the ways in which social media appear to be suitable for use is displayed in Figure [9.3](#). A recurring theme throughout this thesis has been a



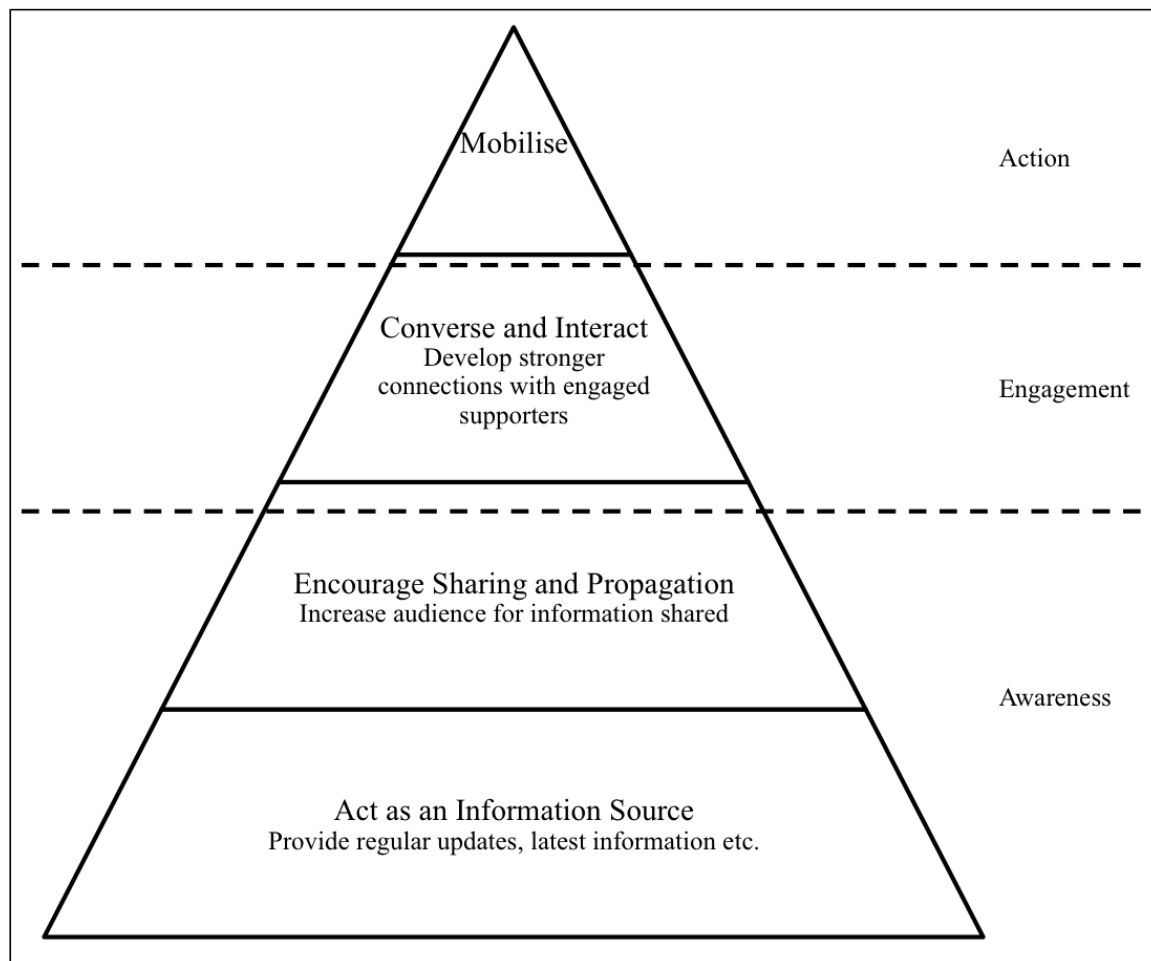


Figure 9.3: Pyramid model of social media use by charities, based loosely on the pyramid model of social media-based advocacy in [Guo and Saxton \(2013\)](#).

supporter's progression up a relationship 'ladder' with a charity, reflected primarily by the AEA model presented in Chapter 5. In the background section, [Guo and Saxton \(2013\)](#) were referred to, and their proposed pyramid model for advocacy on social media was highlighted as a way of differentiating the use of these services by advocacy groups in the USA. Adapting this based on the literature review carried out earlier, and the findings of this research, Figure 9.3 has been produced to depict an abstract representation of the different levels of use of social media by charities, with regard to their outcomes (aligned to the AEA model) and the relative size of the likely audience who could regularly be targeted (related to their placement on the pyramid).

### Information Source

The foundation of the pyramid is based on the extensive amount of literature, and both the interview and survey results, that suggest one of the primary reasons supporters connect with charities on social media is to find out the latest information. Whether these users are described as 'slacktivists' ([Rotman et al., 2011](#)), 'interpassive' ([Kappler and de Querol, 2011](#)), 'lurkers' ([Takahashi et al., 2003](#)) or

‘listeners’ (Crawford, 2009), it is impossible to rule out their importance or role within a social media community. Therefore using social media for this purpose is a fundamental stage that should be carried out in order to provide visible updates about the charity’s work—as the survey results showed, supporters tend to receive their most frequent news about a charity through social media platforms. This would typically require one of the ‘content gifter’ styles of communication as presented in the classification system in Section 8.1.3 in order to provide a high level of quality content to the audience.

### **Encourage Sharing**

In order to make progress and generally ‘grow’ the community, efforts should be made to increase the size of the audience which can be achieved by increasing awareness of the charity and their cause. Social networks and the connections that users have on these sites allow content to very quickly and easily propagate to new users. Leveraging these social ties, a charity can begin to increase its reach, and therefore improve the returns of their information sharing work in the earlier stage. As this is still fundamentally awareness generation, it again requires a ‘content gifter’ strategy in order to provide information about the charity.

### **Converse**

Some supporters are more willing to engage with the community than others, as shown by this research. Referring back to the literature, it is important for the charity to facilitate this as a lack of interactivity could turn away potential supporters who may be considering connecting to the charity (Waters et al., 2009). Strengthening relationships with supporters came across as one of the key goals charities had for social media and so by conversing with these supporters they increase both their chances of achieving this, and of attracting and retaining new supporters. This would typically require one of the ‘responder’ communication styles as it would show willingness to interact and engage in two-way conversations on their part, which would be required in order to develop trust and familiarity with their audience. Additionally, longer conversation chains should ideally be observed in response to their posts, as a sign of their audience becoming more interested and engaged.

### **Mobilise**

At the summit of the pyramid is the use of social media to mobilise their supporters for action. This could take numerous forms, but requires a sizeable audience from the lower levels in order to hear the request, and could be helped by having a large portion of these engaged and regularly interacting, who can then spread the campaign and encourage participation themselves. At this point, a mixed communication style is required that allows the flexibility to create further awareness, foster continuing engagement and then finally refer the supporters to the relevant information of campaign. In addition, more conversation chains that were not

started by the charity itself may be observed as a potential result, as supporters take to social media to promote their own involvement in a campaign.

As an abstract model this seeks to make no claims about the exact size of each portion of the audience who would be suitable to target with each of these types of use. Rather this represents what appears to be, in a general sense, the potential areas for social media to be used in relation to the numbers of ‘engaged’ supporters compared to the number of connected supporters. Therefore it reflects the relative size of the different areas in which value could potentially be produced.

## 9.4 Limitations and Future Potential

Using an investigative approach to this research meant that rather than trying to establish ‘how much’ value was produced from social media, an idea of where and how value can be produced has been presented. While this has allowed a number of areas to be examined and considered, there have been some inherent limitations to the findings produced. Primarily, there has been no attempt to measure ‘success’, or to track and determine whether interaction on social media ultimately leads to action in a meaningful sense—such as a donation or offer to volunteer. In attempting to analyse a broad picture of social media use across charities, there has been little focus or in-depth study of any particular examples to assess what works for them over time, and how this relates to changes in performance regarding the outcomes they desire. However this work has addressed several important steps that are required in order to do so reliably, and therefore fills an important gap that many previous studies appeared to be missing. This was a methodological decision, and the approach was chosen to develop a more thorough understanding in the area, which this thesis has summarised.

Several of the research methods chosen—primarily the interviews and survey—had an inherent reliance on self-reported behaviour and therefore may not offer an entirely accurate picture. However the methodological choices to triangulate these findings with more observational techniques using data from the social networks themselves has gone some way to mitigating this. This also offered an alternative approach to assessing a sizeable sample in order to represent the entire population of charities on social media.

The findings from the survey of supporters are also somewhat limited. While indications have been drawn from the responses, these can not necessarily be used to generalise across the entire population as the sample itself is not necessarily representative. There is however a large amount of potential for this survey to be rolled out through charities’s networks of followers around the country in order to get a much larger response rate, which could provide further illuminating insights. This would allow more conclusive claims to be made based on what supporters want to use social media for, and clarify the

size of the audience who simply has no interest in engaging on social media platforms. Using this in combination with the conversation chain analysis could help to build a conclusive argument as to how sizeable the interacting audience is for a charity on particular social media sites. Similarly, carrying out a content analysis of supporters' posts in response to charity messages would provide another channel through which to triangulate a theory on how much—and what kind of—interaction occurs between the two parties on social media. Finally, adding in a longitudinal element to this survey would allow an assessment of how these views change over time, which could provide further indications as to whether the charity is succeeding with their goals.

Furthermore, the research presented in this thesis has focused on two of the largest social networks at the time of writing: Facebook and Twitter. It has been shown that just between these two sites, the communication and interaction that occurs is contrasting, and so it is likely that this would continue should more sites be studied. The results here highlight this, however, which is important given that this is such a fast-moving, dynamic area where new services can arise quickly—potentially offering completely different types or styles of engagement. As such the results presented here can not be broadened out to cover all social media services, but reflect the views, opinions and behaviour on two sites that are currently hugely popular.

## 9.5 Final Remarks and Conclusions

The value of social media to a charitable organisation is undoubtedly a complex matter. There is the feeling that the use of these services is becoming ever more expected, and so charities require greater understanding if they are to utilise them fully. Indeed the importance seemingly placed on social media in the survey results for finding out the latest information indicates the increasing reliance on and assumption that charities will have some form of online social presence. However, problems are caused by the fact that large numbers of supporters have no intention of interacting through these channels, and see them solely as channels through which to receive information, and this has been shown in the survey and conversation chain analysis results.

Assessing the value of these tools will importantly be a very unique task for each organisation using them. The context of the charity along with the aims and strategies that they have for social media in the first place will play a very large part in affecting the end results of their social communication, and therefore these must be taken into account when analysis is being carried out. Trying to simply 'automate' social media analysis with no background context can only lead to shallow and generic measures that may mean little to the charity or organisation in question. However the work in this thesis provides a number of signposts as to what should be included when determining an analytics plan for any one charity. Firstly, the intentions of the charity must be discovered so

that the correct elements of ‘success’ can be assigned and this is important as because of the range of aims, the resulting outcomes vary considerably. Crucially, as well as looking at the resulting engagement from supporters, the actual communication of the charity itself must be analysed in order to determine whether it actually meets their strategy in the first place—this thesis has presented a method of automating this process over time using just the types of tweets that they send, which can help to establish whether or not their aims could potentially be met. Finally, the value of the subset of interacting users must then be considered. While it is clear—from the literature and both the conversation chain and survey analyses—that only a small number of supporters will choose to interact, these users evidently create an impression that shows collaborative and productive online environments. The interviewees all suggested that their social media profiles received public attention and engagement, and generally perceived them as producing some sort of positive, but unquantifiable value—perhaps the difficulty in establishing what this really represents is because it originates from a small subset of their followers. If so then the value that these users are creating is in their contribution to an online community that other more reserved supporters can place higher levels of trust in and in turn form a stronger connection with the charity themselves (Seraj, 2012; Waters et al., 2009). Saxton and Wang (2013) stated that converting supporters from just ‘liking’ content to those who actually go on to donate is one of the main issues with social media but the survey results implied a large disparity between intentions for interacting on social media and the reasons behind deciding to act in support of a charity. If, as the survey suggested, supporters are most influenced by their own inherent interests, or personal connections to the charity then these supporters may already have existing patterns of donating or support that additional campaigning on social media may have little chance of changing. As such, is the issue really in getting supporters to donate more, or that campaigns to connected supporters on social media are just reaching those who are already donors anyway? This could explain why receiving up-to-date news was seemingly the largest benefit of connecting with charities on social media.

In terms of contributions, this thesis presents a number of them. As explained throughout, assessing the value of social media to any one organisation is difficult, but a number of ‘tools’ have been proposed in this research that can provide insights into various stages, which when used together, can offer increased understanding into the area. The results of the research presented here include a breakdown of various goals that charities have for social media, ranging from relationship building, mobilisation and referral traffic to fundraising. A typology of communication styles, including a reusable and automatic algorithm for classifying a given charity has also been developed which can be used to compare with a given strategy to determine where the charity needs to adjust their own communication patterns. These two contributions are linked to the AEA model devised in the early stages of this work, which provides a basic structure to any attempt to measure social media outcomes, and can be used to clarify what results an organisation could expect from following a particular strategy, or communicating in a certain way, for

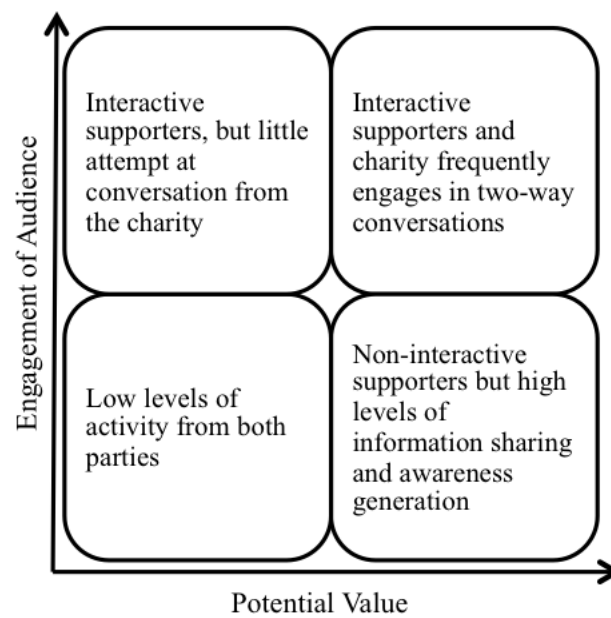


Figure 9.4: The potential value caused by the levels of activity from a charity's supporters and the organisation's responses to this.

example. The survey provides initial insights into what supporters actually want and are interested in from charities on social media, which appears to have had little attention in the existing literature—instead analysis of how interacting users communicate on the sites tends to be favoured. Finally the conversation chain analysis offers an intriguing comparison of how this interaction occurs on two large social media sites in order to differentiate the engagement that is facilitated by each of them. A summary of the findings has also been used to form the two models in Figures 9.2 and 9.3 which capture the ways in which the various strands of this research come together.

As mentioned earlier, the value of social media will be unique to each and every charity that adopts it, based on their intentions and the way in which they utilise it. However it does appear that some general points have been made that reflect particular areas of value creation. There is a strong suggestion that for generating awareness, the first stage of the AEA model, social media provide many opportunities and a large number of supporters receive frequent updates through these channels. This provides an opportunity that no other channel can provide to charities—a method by which they can get weekly, and sometimes more regular, updates to interested supporters for virtually no cost, unlike a newsletter, and on which supporters can see others publicly responding and engaging, unlike an email. Future research opportunities lie around this factor and determining the changes in perception that these regular updates may have on supporters—the survey results here did not seem to indicate that supporters *believed* social media had much of an influence on their decisions to act, but this could be investigated in more detail.

Furthermore there appears to be significant value in supporters being able to converse openly about their actions in support of a charity. Supporters who discussed the charity appeared to do so more frequently—at least observably—on Twitter than on Facebook, and this may have been down to the more public nature of the majority of Twitter’s content. When supporters do make posts regarding their intention to act for a particular charity, it is easy to add in a ‘mention’ on Twitter without directly posting ‘to’ them. On Facebook a similar post on a user’s timeline may be hidden under their personal profile settings, and therefore the charity would not be able to observe it. Therefore using Twitter to locate these discussions that occur alongside the charity’s own work offers a tremendous opportunity to create value through promoting the charitable intentions of others, without directly campaigning to them. Returning to two campaigns that recently gained widespread media attention in the UK discussed in Section 3.3—the ‘#nomakeupselfie’ and ‘Ice Bucket Challenge’—this point is especially relevant as these campaigns were not started by charities themselves, and were products of people wanting to help and the viral nature of content on social media which the charities were then able to pick up on and promote further. Being tuned into these conversations on social media seems to be particularly valuable, and this also shows that generating awareness through campaigns such as this can bring about worthy results.

The final conclusion of this thesis, therefore, is that the value of social media to any one charity will depend on a combination of their intentions, their own behaviour, and the willingness and actions of their supporter-base. This is summarised in Figure 9.4. There is value to be created using these services, as discussed above, but this is more complex than can be assessed with a simple tool that analyses one network’s timeline of activity and declares whether or not they are ‘succeeding’. By using the steps and methods proposed here, it is believed that greater understanding could be gained within a charitable organisation about what they need to do on social media in order to produce the results they desire. Additionally, understanding the desires and intentions of their supporter-base is critical, as is managing the generally small portion of interacting supporters who create the ‘engaged’ environment that may attract many of the non-interacting social media users. With this knowledge and understanding, it is proposed that charities will be able to perform better on these sites and take advantage of them at a time when the use of these tools is both expected by the public, and required in a harsh economic climate in which gaining attention through low cost channels is vitally important.

# Appendix A

## Cyclical AEA Model Stages

This appendix details the stages of the revised cyclical AEA model that were presented in tabular form in Chapter 5. As with Chapter 5 this work was primarily completed as part of the MSc Web Science course that preceded the main element of this research, although this was updated and refined throughout the entire period of study.

### A.1 Awareness

The awareness stage is common in models relating to the stages in a marketing relationship with an audience—for both corporate and non-corporate campaigns. Sterne classifies this step as “Get[ting] their attention” and labels it as “the first step on the path to a long and profitable customer experience”, underlining its importance (Sterne, 2010, p. 15). Similarly, Larson and Watson (2011) in their classification of outcomes that motivate social media use claim that awareness is the first step on the path to developing a loyal customer base. Hoffman and Fodor (2010) stress the importance of increasing exposure of a brand to increase the associations within a customer or supporter’s mind. Cruz and Fill (2008) use awareness together with reach and knowledge as evaluative criteria for the first of three classifications of objectives for viral campaigns: cognitive goals. Reach is also used as one of three “pillars” of social media measurement, describing the quantity and quality of people talking about a brand (Murdough, 2009). Taking the concept of awareness and reach slightly further, Bennett (2007) suggests a category of metrics falling under the title “perception” to take into account the audience’s opinions of the organisation as well as the raw awareness. Somewhat differently, (Vegh, 2003, p. 72-74) propose ‘Awareness/Advocacy’ as the first of three steps in online activism, where information is digitally distributed to intensify public knowledge of a cause and help with the organisation of the campaign.



## A.2 Awareness - Engagement

Developing from the cognitive goals described above, [Cruz and Fill \(2008\)](#) identify behavioural goals as the next objectives in a viral campaign. This involves measuring the number of page views and the rate at which specific content is shared on the Web, which indicates more than just awareness, but does not appear to represent a significant level of engagement ([Cruz and Fill, 2008](#)). For this reason, a new intermediary stage between these two steps is required to allow for this, and to appreciate that measuring viral marketing requires more granularity than the original proposed steps allowed. Furthermore, [Bennett \(2007\)](#)'s classification of some metrics as "satisfaction" metrics can be assigned to this stage, as they revolve around the donor's feelings towards the charity, including their feelings of commitment and satisfaction with the interaction to and from the organisation. This could be assigned to the engagement section itself, but as these measurements focus solely on feelings and opinions, rather than actual measurement of engagement, it was decided that this intermediary stage would be more suitable.

## A.3 Engagement

[Sterne \(2010, p. 13\)](#) identifies two steps in the relationship between company and customer that fit in the engagement stage of the proposed model: sentiment ("Get[ting] them to like you") and interaction ("Get[ting] them to interact"). These steps reflect engagement with the organisation online by ensuring that discussions about them are positive, and that their interaction online is worthwhile and meaningful to the organisation. [Murdough \(2009\)](#) proposes a second pillar of measurement that is equal to Sterne's sentiment stage as "discussions", referring to the need to track the topics and related sentiment being discussed that is relevant to the organisation. [Hoffman and Fodor \(2010\)](#) also propose two objectives of marketing on social media which can be categorised in the engagement stage. "Brand engagement" is an objective which requires the audience to interact and commit to the organisation, which can lead to increased probability of future commitment and support ([Hoffman and Fodor, 2010](#)). "Word of mouth" indicates that the process of how something is spread online is indicative of how engaged the audience is with the campaign or organisation, and because online marketing allows this to now be measured directly, is seen as a key objective ([Hoffman and Fodor, 2010](#)). Alternatively, [Larson and Watson \(2011\)](#)'s next classification of outcomes is persuasion, which is described as the added benefit that bi-directional communication on social media allows, where customers and organisations can affect each others' decisions. This can lead to stronger relationships with the audience, and highlights the importance of the engagement stage for this type of marketing campaign. Vegh's classification of online activism continues to fit with the proposed model into the engagement stage, with the

step “Organisation/Mobilisation” filling this area (Vegh, 2003, p. 74-75). This step involves a call for some form of action (either offline or online), utilising the Internet to be able to manage this task effectively and in a way not previously available (Vegh, 2003, p. 74-75). A requirement of this step to succeed would be that the supporters are suitably engaged with the activism campaign, and therefore it is suitable to locate this step in the engagement stage.

## A.4 Engagement - Action

While the collaboration outcomes suggested by Larson and Watson (2011) could be categorised as an engagement stage, it was decided that it should be placed in a new intermediate stage. Collaborative work in the context of a charitable campaign may well be a representation of charitable action or activism to support the cause. Additionally, Bennett (2007) classifies certain metrics under the heading “advertising effectiveness” which include measures of both expenditure in relation to donations received, recall of advertisements, and also the generation of word-of-mouth. Murdough (2009)’s third pillar of measurement is “outcomes”, referring to increased site traffic and inclinations to purchase that may have arisen because of the campaign. These both cover metrics that measure more than just engagement, but because they do not all represent significant ‘offline’ action, this intermediary stage is most suitable.

## A.5 Action and Results

Sterne (2010, p. 13)’s final step in the relationship with a customer is “convince them to buy”—essentially persuasion, but in this case persuading them to buy (or act) rather than Larson and Watson (2011)’s persuasion stage which refers more to the two-way persuasive effects between organisation and audience. Similarly, Cruz and Fill (2008) label their final set of objectives as financial goals, covering a return on investment and a development in brand equity, and Bennett (2007) categorises a final set of metrics as “accounting”, owing to their financial nature and relation to donor acquisition, retention and value. The final category in Vegh (2003)’s classification of online activism is “Action/Reaction”, meaning that this early model proposed for activism fits remarkably well into the proposed stages for the framework. This step in the classification covers online ‘hacktivist’ style activities that may be carried out, as an alternative to offline action (Vegh, 2003).

## A.6 Action - Awareness

A further intermediary stage was identified, which transforms the model of steps involved in marketing campaigns from a progressive list, to a cycle. It was recognised from observing news stories on charitable work that when significant action occurs, a subsequent rise in awareness is caused. Investigation of this led to the finding of [Bajpai and Jaiswal \(2011\)](#)'s framework for analysing collective action on Twitter, which makes it apparent that post-action awareness creation goes further than expected, and actually occurs during action. Three elements of the collective action analysis framework fit with this: tactics (referring to information about the movement, or the opposition), information seeking (where users ask for details or clarification about the event), and reportage (personal accounts of what is occurring during the event) ([Bajpai and Jaiswal, 2011](#)).

## Appendix B

### Observational Schedule

| Charity Name                          |  |          |         |
|---------------------------------------|--|----------|---------|
| Data Date Range                       |  |          |         |
| Facebook Profile URL                  |  |          |         |
| Twitter Profile URL                   |  |          |         |
| Behaviour                             |  | Observed |         |
|                                       |  | Facebook | Twitter |
| Organisational Disclosure (Megaphone) | Mission Statement                                    |          |         |
|                                       | Contact Details                                      |          |         |
|                                       | Links to other social media or websites              |          |         |
| Dissemination (Megaphone)             | Photos posted  |          |         |
|                                       | Videos posted  |          |         |
|                                       | Link to blog   |          |         |
|                                       | Embed blog   |          |         |
|                                       | Link to specific campaigns/petitions                 |          |         |
|                                       | Link to news/information                             |          |         |
|                                       | Link to store  |          |         |
|                                       | Specific call for help/action/event<br>e.g. rehoming |          |         |
|                                       | Total Posts  |          |         |
|                                       | Campaign specific 'apps'                             |          |         |
| Engagement (Magnet)                   | Events   |          |         |
|                                       | Allow user posts to Facebook page                    |          |         |
|                                       | Facilitate donations                                 |          |         |
|                                       | Store  |          |         |
|                                       | Volunteer opportunities                              |          |         |
|                                       | Total Audience Posts                                 |          |         |
| Monitoring (Monitor)                  | Shortened (traceable) links                          |          |         |
|                                       | Interact on audience's Facebook posts                |          |         |
|                                       | Retweets audience                                    |          |         |
|                                       | Replies to audience                                  |          |         |

Figure B.1: Structured observation schedule for recording 'behaviour' of charities on social media



## Appendix C

# Quantitative Structured Observation Results

| Charity | FACEBOOK | Links to other social media/web site |                 |      | Dissemination (Megaphone)             | Links to blog or internally run page |        |          | Links to a specific campaign or petition |   |  |
|---------|----------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------|----------|--|---|--|
|         |          | Mission Statement                    | Contact Details | site |                                       | Photos                               | Videos | embedded | Blog stories                             |   |  |
| 1       |          | 1                                    | 1 website       | 1    | Organisational Disclosure (Megaphone) | 2                                    | 0      | 22       | 0  | 2 |  |
| 2       |          | 1                                    | 1 website       | 0    |                                       | 1                                    | 0      | 11       | 0  | 7 |  |
| 3       |          | 1                                    | 1               | 1    |                                       | 7                                    | 0      | 3        | 0  | 1 |  |
| 4       |          | 1                                    | 1               | 1    |                                       | 0                                    | 4      | 8        | 0  | 6 |  |
| 5       |          | 1                                    | 1               | 0    |                                       | 0                                    | 0      | 0        | 0  | 0 |  |
| 6       |          | 1                                    | 1               | 1    |                                       | 0                                    | 1      | 5        | 0  | 1 |  |
| 7       |          | 1                                    | 1               | 0    |                                       | 8                                    | 0      | 8        | 0  | 2 |  |
| 8       |          | 1                                    | 1               | 0    |                                       | 1                                    | 9      | 10       | 0  | 5 |  |
| 9       |          | 1 website                            | 1               | 0    |                                       | 7                                    | 2      | 5        | 0  | 0 |  |
| 10      |          | 1                                    | 1               | 1    |                                       | 2                                    | 2      | 2        | 0  | 2 |  |
| 11      |          | 1                                    | 1               | 1    |                                       | 0                                    | 1      | 5        | 6  | 4 |  |
| 12      |          | 1                                    | 1               | 0    |                                       | 7                                    | 0      | 9        | 0  | 2 |  |
| 13      |          | 1                                    | 1               | 1    |                                       | 1                                    | 1      | 3        | 0  | 4 |  |
| 14      |          | 1                                    | 1               | 1    |                                       | 3                                    | 2      | 8        | 0  | 2 |  |
| 15      |          | 1                                    | 1               | 0    |                                       | 5                                    | 2      | 4        | 0  | 0 |  |
| 16      |          | 1 website                            |                 | 1    |                                       | 4                                    | 0      | 11       | 0  | 2 |  |
| 17      |          | 1 website                            |                 | 0    |                                       | 14                                   | 0      | 15       | 0  | 7 |  |
| 18      |          | 1                                    | 1               | 1    |                                       | 15                                   | 1      | 13       | 0  | 0 |  |
| 19      |          | 1                                    | 1               | 0    |                                       | 1                                    | 0      | 24       | 0  | 8 |  |
| 20      |          | 1 website                            |                 | 1    |                                       | 3                                    | 2      | 7        | 0  | 3 |  |
| 21      |          | 1                                    | 1               | 1    | 0                                     | 0                                    | 1      | 0        | 0  |   |  |
| TOTAL   |          | 21                                   | 16              | 12   |                                       |                                      |        |          |  |   |  |

Figure C.1: Structured observation data about how charities use social media (1/3)

| Link to externally sourced news or information | Total Posts | Specific call for help, action, or to attend an event e.g. rehoming |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Link to store | Events | Donations facilitated | Facebook Store | Campaign Apps | User posts allowed | Volunteer Opportunities | Audience Posts |
|--|-------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---------------|--------|-----------------------|----------------|---------------|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
|  |             | 3   | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0             | 0      | 0                     | 0              | 0             | 1                  | 0                       | 0              |
| 2  | 38          | 3   | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0             | 0      | 0                     | 0              | 0             | 1                  | 0                       | 39             |
| 0  | 21          | 1   | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0             | 0      | 0                     | 0              | 0             | 1                  | 1                       | 143            |
| 0  | 12          | 1   | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0             | 0      | 0                     | 0              | 0             | 1                  | 0                       | 45             |
| 0  | 15          | 0   | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0             | 0      | 0                     | 0              | 0             | 1                  | 1                       | 219            |
| 0  | 0           | 0   | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0             | 0      | 0                     | 0              | 0             | 1                  | 0                       | 0              |
| 2  | 12          | 3   | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0             | 0      | 0                     | 0              | 0             | 1                  | 0                       | 596            |
| 4  | 25          | 9   | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0             | 0      | 0                     | 0              | 0             | 1                  | 0                       | n/a            |
| 1  | 64          | 10  | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0             | 0      | 0                     | 0              | 0             | 1                  | 0                       | 105            |
| 1  | 17          | 5   | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0             | 0      | 0                     | 0              | 0             | 1                  | 0                       | 187            |
| 1  | 11          | 2   | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0             | 0      | 0                     | 0              | 0             | 1                  | 0                       | 107            |
| 0  | 18          | 4   | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0             | 0      | 0                     | 0              | 0             | 1                  | 0                       | 72             |
| 3  | 21          | 2   | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0             | 0      | 0                     | 0              | 0             | 1                  | 0                       | 108            |
| 4  | 17          | 2   | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0             | 0      | 0                     | 0              | 0             | 1                  | 1                       | 40             |
| 3  | 22          | 5   | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1             | 1      | 1                     | 1              | 1             | 1                  | 0                       | 65             |
| 11   | 24          | 1   | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1             | 1      | 0                     | 0              | 1             | 1                  | 0                       | 14             |
| 0  | 18          | 0   | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0             | 0      | 0                     | 0              | 0             | 1                  | 0                       | 1126           |
| 0  | 37          | 10  | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0             | 0      | 1                     | 0              | 0             | 0                  | 1                       | n/a            |
| 2  | 25          | 4   | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0             | 0      | 0                     | 0              | 0             | 1                  | 0                       | 285            |
| 0  | 38          | 7   | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0             | 0      | 1                     | 0              | 0             | 1                  | 0                       | 26             |
| 0  | 12          | 0   | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0             | 0      | 1                     | 0              | 0             | 1                  | 0                       | 422            |
| 0  | 1           | 0   | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0             | 0      | 0                     | 0              | 0             | 1                  | 0                       | 0              |
|  |             | 16  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 5             |        | 6                     | 6              | 18            | 20                 | 4                       |                |

Figure C.2: Structured observation data about how charities use social media (2/3)



|                      | Interact on audience's posts |       | TWITTER   | Mission Statement |           | Contact Details |           | Links to other social media | Dissemination (Megaphone) |    | Normal (new) Tweets Sent |     | Hashtags Used (Total) |    | Different Hashtags Used (excluding retweets) |     | Engagement (Magnet) | Replies/Direct Tweets | Monitoring (Monitor) | Retweets |    |
|----------------------|------------------------------|-------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|----|--------------------------|-----|-----------------------|----|--|-----|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------|----|
|                      | Shortened Links              | posts |           | Statement         | Details   | media           |           |                             |                           |    |                          |     |                       |    |  |     |                     |                       |                      |          |    |
| Monitoring (Monitor) | occasional                   |       |           |                   |           |                 |           |                             |                           |    |                          |     |                       |    |  |     |                     |                       |                      |          |    |
|                      | 0 Y (occasional)             | 1     |           | 1 website         | 1 website | 0               | 1 website | 1                           | 0                         | 57 | 13                       | 58  | 11                    | 30 | 2  | 172 | 26                  | 21                    | 52                   | 5        |    |
|                      | 1                            |       |           | 1 website         | 1 website | 0               | 1 website | 1                           | 0                         | 17 | 19                       | 15  | 38                    | 14 | 8  | 17  | 10                  | 43                    | 3                    |          |    |
|                      | 0 Y (occasional)             |       |           | 1 website         | 1 website | 0               | 1 website | 0                           | 0                         | 15 | 27                       | 12  | 27                    | 11 | 5  | 15  | 81                  | 7                     | 7                    | 6        |    |
|                      | 1                            |       |           | 1 website         | 1 website | 0               | 1 website | 0                           | 0                         | 17 | 0                        | 63  | 6                     | 0  | 36   | 252 | 6                   | 4                     | 2                    | 3        |    |
|                      | 1                            |       |           | 1 website         | 1 website | 0               | 1 website | 1                           | 0                         | 77 | 13                       | 176 | 30                    | 17 | 24   | 327 | 7                   | 3                     | 32                   | 4        |    |
|                      | 1 Y (occasional)             |       |           | 1 website         | 1 website | 0               | 1 website | 0                           | 0                         | 60 | 30                       | 130 | 19                    | 59 | 16   | 7   | 3                   | 16                    | 16                   | 2        | 16 |
|                      | 0 Y (occasional)             |       |           | 1 website         | 1 website | 0               | 1 website | 0                           | 0                         | 7  | 9                        | 19  | 11                    | 30 | 17   | 3   | 172                 | 26                    | 21                   | 52       | 5  |
|                      | 1 Y (occasional)             |       |           | 1 website         | 1 website | 0               | 1 website | 0                           | 0                         | 37 | 13                       | 109 | 14                    | 17 | 11   | 147 | 256                 | 17                    | 17                   | 17       | 17 |
|                      | 1 n/a                        |       |           | 1 website         | 1 website | 0               | 1 website | 1                           | 0                         | 20 | 19                       | 20  | 14                    | 2  | 2  | 18  | 256                 | 19                    | 19                   | 19       | 19 |
| 1                    |                              |       | 1 website | 1 website         | 0         | 1 website       | 0         | 0                           | 30                        | 12 | 23                       | 23  | 11                    | 11 | 18   | 18  | 10                  | 10                    | 10                   | 10       |    |
| 1                    |                              |       | 1 website | 1 website         | 0         | 1 website       | 0         | 0                           | 14                        | 27 | 14                       | 14  | 5                     | 5  | 10   | 0   | 3                   | 3                     | 3                    | 3        |    |
| 1                    |                              |       | 1 website | 1 website         | 0         | 1 website       | 0         | 0                           | 64                        | 0  | 24                       | 24  | 1                     | 1  | 1  | 0   | 1                   | 1                     | 1                    | 1        |    |
| 1 n/a                |                              |       | 1 website | 1 website         | 0         | 1 website       | 0         | 0                           | 1                         | 13 | 1                        | 2   | 1                     | 1  | 7  | 7   | 5                   | 5                     | 5                    | 5        |    |
| 15                   |                              |       |           |                   |           |                 |           |                             |                           |    |                          |     |                       |    |  |     |                     |                       |                      |          |    |
|                      | 15                           | 10    |           | 21                | 4         | 2               |           |                             |                           |    |                          |     |                       |    |  |     |                     |                       |                      |          |    |

Figure C.3: Structured observation data about how charities use social media (3/3)

## Appendix D

# Semi-structured Interview Schedule

### 1. Describe how your charity uses social media

- What social media services do you use?
- What features of these sites do you use? (e.g. Facebook events, campaign hashtags etc.)
- How long has your charity been using social media, and has there been any change to the way you have used these services over time?
- How many staff/hours do you allocate to managing social media? (Discuss resources allocated to social media)
- How do you think your users respond to your social media use?
  - Do they engage with you?
  - Why do you think they follow your charity on social media?

### 2. Can you explain why your charity uses social media?

- Do you use each social media site for different purposes, or for an overall goal?
- What features of these services in particular do you think are beneficial for your charity?
- Do you believe using social media is worth anything? Do you think there are real returns?
- How else does your charity carry out marketing activities, other than on social media?
  - Do you think your charity could rely solely on social media?
  - Do you think your charity could continue without social media?
  - *Elicit their feelings on how important social media is to them, what the potential is, where it is lacking etc.*

- Why do you choose to use social media over other forms of marketing and vice versa?
3. Overall, what do you think your charity is hoping to achieve by using social media?
- *Possible examples: increase awareness of issues, increased engagement with supporters, recruitment of new donors, etc.*
  - Do you think marketing via social media is successful?
  - How do you determine success on social media, and how do you measure this?
    - Is there anything that you think successful campaigns on social media have in common? Or are they each completely different?
  - How do you determine if a campaign went badly?
    - Do you have any examples of failed campaigns and any insight into what might have caused this?

## Appendix E

# Thematic Analysis Codebook

| Code Number | Description  |
|-------------|--|
| 1           | General use  |
| 1.1         | Use of a social media service                                |
| 1.11        | Use of a specific feature of a service                       |
| 1.2         | Change in use of a service                                   |
| 1.3         | Other marketing activities/channels used                     |
| 1.4         | Use for financial gain                                       |
| 1.5         | Resources for using social media                             |
| 1.51        | Budget   |
| 1.52        | Personnel  |
| 1.6         | Importance of social media and how its benefits are used     |
| 1.7         | Importance of other channel and how social media can't match |
| 1.8         | Audience demographics  |
| 1.9         | Planned future use   |
| 1.91        | Possible Use   |

Table E.1: General Use Codes

| Code Number | Description                                |
|-------------|--|
| 2           | Reasons why social media is used           |
| 2.1         | Strategy for social media                  |
| 2.11        | Strategy for a specific service            |
| 2.12        | Specific features beneficial for a charity |
| 2.2         | How audience uses their social media       |
| 2.3         | Value of social media and its returns      |
| 2.4         | Importance of social media                 |
| 2.5         | Limitations of social media                |
| 2.6         | Target from using social media             |
| 2.61        | Primary target                             |
| 2.62        | Additional targets/attempts                |

Table E.2: Reasons Why Social Media is Used Codes

| Code Number | Description   |
|-------------|---|
| 3           | Success perception                                    |
| 3.1         | Audience engaging                                     |
| 3.2         | Audience doing something for the charity              |
| 3.3         | Perceived level of success                            |
| 3.4         | Specific service appearing to be better for something |
| 3.5         | Opinion on what makes something work                  |
| 4           | Success measurement                                   |
| 4.1         | Methods of measuring performance                      |
| 4.2         | Successful campaign similarities                      |
| 4.3         | Failed campaign similarities/reasons                  |
| 4.4         | Anecdotal evidence                                    |

Table E.3: Success Perception Codes

## Appendix F

# Interview Participants

This appendix lists the interviewees from Chapter 6 and the charity which they were representing.

| Interviewee | Charity         |
|-------------|-----------------|
| 1           | Dogs Trust      |
| 2           | Help for Heroes |
| 3           | Diabetes UK     |
| 4           | Jeans for Genes |
| 5           | Woodland Trust  |

Table F.1: Charities that the interviewees represented



## Appendix G

# Survey Design



# Why do supporters engage with and act for charities?

This study will form part of a PhD research agenda at the University of Southampton. I am researching how to evaluate charitable marketing performance and in order to suitably select the best metrics for this, the first stage is to determine how and why users engage with and act for charities. The aim of this survey is to elicit the ways in which people interact with charities, and what motivates them to do so. The survey will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete.

If you would like more detailed information about this study before taking part, please read the Participant Information Sheet available from <http://users.ecs.soton.ac.uk/cjp106/Research/ParticipantInformation>

*Please check the box below to indicate that you agree to the following statements and the Data Protection statement beneath:*

- I have read the participant information provided for this study
- My participation is voluntary
- I can withdraw from this study by not completing and submitting this survey
- I am at least 18 years of age

## **Data Protection**

*I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on the iSurvey platform and downloaded to a password protected computer that only the researcher will have access to, and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study. All files containing any personal data will be made anonymous.*

## Section 1. How Do You Engage With Charities?

### Question 1.1

Do you regularly support or follow the work of a charity?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

### **Question 1.1b**

### **Question 1.1c**

Which charity do you support or follow? (If you support multiple charities, please provide the one that you feel you support the most).

### Question 1.2

Have you donated to - or supported in any way - any other charity in the last 6 months?

*This could involve entering your name to support a campaign, donating money, buying from a charitable gift shop etc.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

### **Question 1.2b**

### **Question 1.2c**

Which charity did you support? If there was more than one, please choose the one you feel closest to.

## Section 2. How and why did you engage?

For this section, please think about the charity you recently supported - if applicable - or the charity you regularly support if not.

### Question 2.1

In what ways do you keep up with the work of either the charity you support or the charity you recently supported?

Rank the following services in terms of their importance to you for finding out about the charity's work, where 1 is the most important. You do not have to include all the options in your ranking - for example you can choose only one option and rank it as "1" to show that is the only way you keep up with them.

- Postal information e.g. a newsletter
- Email newsletter or updates
- The charity's website or blog
- Local shop or centre for the charity
- Social Media (Facebook Twitter etc.)
- Other

#### Question 2.2

If you selected 'Other' in the previous question, please state the other method you use to keep up with the charity

#### Question 2.3

Think about some of the reasons you decided to act in support of the charity. For each of the following options, mark on the scale from 'Not at all' to 'Completely' how much you think it influenced your decision to act:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| A personal connection - the charity has directly helped you  | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| A friend/family connection - the charity has helped someone you know, or someone you know was raising money for them | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| A news story   | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| The charity's communication (newsletter, update etc.)  | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| A post from the charity on social media  | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| A post from someone else about the charity on social media   | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| General interest in the charity's work   | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| An urgent charity appeal   | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| Advertisement (television, radio, newspaper etc.)  | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |

#### Question 2.4

Please indicate how close you feel to the charity's work:

- ☐ Distant but I have a general idea of what they're doing
- ☐ I interact with them when they're doing something that interests me
- ☐ I sometimes do work or volunteering for the charity
- ☐ I regularly work for the charity/It is my job
- ☐ N/A - I don't follow and haven't recently supported a charity

#### Question 2.5

How often do you receive communications from the charity? For each of the options below, choose the regularity:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Email  | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| Print newsletter   | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| Telephone  | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| Social Media Updates - e.g. a post the charity has made that has appeared on your timeline | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| Social Media Messages - e.g. a private message sent on social media directly to you        | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |

#### Question 2.6

Typically, where would you go first to find out the latest information about a charity?

- ☐ Charity's Website
- ☐ Social Media
- ☐ Print newsletter
- ☐ Email newsletter
- ☐ Other

#### Question 2.6b

#### Question 2.6c

Other - please state which other method you would go to first:

### Section 3. How do you engage with the charity?

#### Question 3.1

In the first section, you indicated that you had recently supported the following charity:

#### Question 3.2

For this section, please think about the charity you supported recently (shown above, or use the charity you regularly support if you haven't recently supported any other charity).

How easy do you find it to engage or interact with the charity?

|                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Very<br>easy          | Very<br>Easy          | Easy                  | Fairly<br>Easy        | Neutral               | Fairly<br>Difficult   | Difficult             | Very<br>Difficult     | Very<br>difficult     | N/A                   |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

#### Question 3.3

Have you ever contacted the charity?

☐ Yes

☐ No

#### Question 3.3b

How did you go about contacting the charity?

|                   |                          |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Telephone Call    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| In person         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Via their website | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Via social media  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Email             | <input type="checkbox"/> |

#### Question 3.3c

Did you contact them via any other method? Please state how you contacted them if so:

#### Question 3.3d

If you did want to contact a charity, how would you go about doing it?

|                   |                          |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Telephone call    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| In person         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Via their website | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Via social media  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Email             | <input type="checkbox"/> |

#### Question 3.3e

Would you contact them in any other way? Please state how you would contact them if so:

#### Question 3.4

To what extent do you feel that you are part of a community around the charity?

|   |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |  |                       |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|-----------------------|
| I don't feel<br>part of the<br>charity's<br>community | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | I feel very<br>involved in<br>the<br>community | N/A                   |
| <input type="radio"/>                                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                          | <input type="radio"/> |

#### Question 3.5

Think about how you feel about being part of a charitable community.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

*"Being part of a charitable community is important to me"*

|                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly<br>Disagree  | Disagree              | Slightly<br>Disagree  | Neutral               | Slightly<br>Agree     | Agree                 | Strongly<br>Agree     |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Question 3.6

Do you participate in the charitable community at all? (This could involve attending events, interacting with them or other supporters, volunteering or fundraising for the charity etc.)

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

**Question 3.6b**

In what ways do you participate in the community?

- Attending charity events (e.g. coffee mornings, action groups, local meetings etc.) ☐  
Interacting with the charity or other supporters on social media ☐  
Volunteering for the charity ☐  
Fundraising for the charity ☐

**Question 3.6c**

Do you participate in the community in any other ways? Please state how you participate:

Question 3.7

If you decided to donate to a charity, how would you go about doing it?

- ☐ Online via their website (or JustGiving page etc.)  
☐ Online on a social network page e.g. a 'donate' button on Facebook  
☐ Offline in person (e.g. putting money in a collection box)  
☐ SMS Text Message  
☐ Offline through the post  
☐ Telephone  
☐ Other

**Question 3.7b**

If Other, please state how you would donate:

**Question 3.7c**

Which social network would you use for this?

## Section 4. Social Media and Charities

Question 4.1

Do you use social media to follow or interact with any charities?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

**Question 4.1b**

When following or interacting with charities on social media, which of the following do you think you receive:

- Up to date news ☐  
Community spirit ☐  
Motivation ☐  
Help and/or advice from the charity ☐  
Help and/or advice from other supporters ☐  
Opportunities to help (financially or otherwise) ☐

Question 4.2

Do you use any of the following social media sites? For each, please select the extent to which you use it:

- |          |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Facebook | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Twitter  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| YouTube  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

|              |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Google+      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Pinterest    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Instagram    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Question 4.3 |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |

Please show how you interact with any charities on social media sites (if any):

- ☐ Are connected to a charity (follow/like etc.)
- ☐ Express a liking of the charity's content (liking a post on Facebook +1 on Google+ Favourite on Twitter)
- ☐ Repost the charity's content (e.g. Retweet on Twitter Sharing on Facebook or Google+)
- ☐ Reply to the charity's content (Commenting on Facebook/Google+ Replying on Twitter)
- ☐ Direct content to the charity (Posting on their Facebook page or Google+ mentioning or directed tweet on Twitter)

## Section 5. Additional Stage

### Question 5.1

In a previous question about whether you had recently supported any charities, you answered:

*(Don't worry if you left this blank/did not answer this question)*

### Question 5.2

#### Extra Optional Stage:

In order to gain more insights in to how you interact with charities, this is an additional, optional stage of this study. To improve the results, we can cross-reference your responses with public interactions that you might have made with charities on Facebook or Twitter (such as liking the charity's page, following their account, replying to posts, contributing to discussions etc.).

To be able to do this, we would like to ask for you to provide your Facebook ID and/or your Twitter username. **This is completely optional** and there is no requirement to do so - your results to the survey are still valid and useful in this research if you choose not to provide it. If you do provide these details, they will be held securely, and used to run an automated program to examine public interactions with the charity that you listed earlier in the survey.

You can choose to change the charity that you would like this search to be carried out upon, by filling in the box below. The charity you listed in this study is shown above.

Once the data has been collected, the results will be assigned an alternative unique ID, and the record of your username will be destroyed. The data will only ever be used in aggregate, and will never be used to identify you.

More details on how this works:

1. For example, you provide your Facebook ID (*can be found by going to Facebook and clicking on your name at the top-left. On your profile, the address bar will show your ID e.g. [www.facebook.com/new.testers.58](http://www.facebook.com/new.testers.58) where "new.testers.58" is your ID.*)
2. The program collects the posts on the specified charity's Facebook wall - this includes posts by the charity themselves, comments and interactions on them, and posts that users have posted on the page.
3. The program scans through each of these posts, comparing their author and the list of people commenting/liking/sharing them with your username
4. If an interaction from your account is found, then a tally is made of what type of interaction it is: e.g. if you have liked 2 posts by a charity and posted something on their page yourself, then the data returned would be: "Likes:2, Posts:1". The content of any post or message is not saved.
5. The data is saved with your unique participant ID generated while completing the survey.
6. Your Facebook ID is deleted from this study's data.

If you would like to participate in this part of the study, please enter your details below:

Charity to study (leave blank for the charity displayed above, or enter the names of 1 or more charities that you interact with here)

Facebook ID

Twitter ID (@ ....):

## Section 6. About You

#### Question 6.1

To observe trends across different age groups, you can optionally enter your age group:

- ☐ 16-24
- ☐ 25-44
- ☐ 45-64
- ☐ 65+

#### Question 6.2

The purpose of this study was to discover your views on the use of social media for interacting with charities and encouraging support.

If you have any comments about how you think social media has affected your relationship with a charity in any way, please write them below.

Thank you for participating in this study. The aim was to discover how people engage with charities, and what makes them want to act for those organisations. In particular, this research is focused on the effect that social media has in this regard. By completing this survey, I will be able to determine the extent to which social media plays a part in motivating people to act for charities, and whether or not it offers a simpler and more attractive way for people to engage with and stay informed of charitable work.

If you provided your Twitter/Facebook username then by comparing your responses to actual social media data, further analysis can be done to see how levels of social media activity compare to the responses given.

The overall research aim that this study contributes to is an analysis of how best to measure social media use by charities and to determine whether or not it is successful. I will use the views collected from this survey to compare to and validate results from direct measurements of social media campaigns that I will be carrying out. For more information on the general topic I am studying, please see:

- Phethean, C. et al. 2012. Measuring The Performance Of Social Media Marketing In The Charitable Domain. *Web Science 2012* (Evanston, IL, USA, 2012). Available at: <http://eprints.soton.ac.uk/340929/>

and

- C. Phethean, et al. 2013. Rethinking measurements of social media use by charities: A mixed methods approach. *Web Science 2013* (Paris, France). Available at: <http://eprints.soton.ac.uk/353286/>

Your responses will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act, kept confidential, and you will not be named in any productions of this research. Data will be destroyed at the end of the study, and in the meantime will not be used for any other purpose.

If you have a question, or in the unlikely case that you have a concern or complaint about this study, you should contact the researcher, Christopher Phethean at [cjp106@soton.ac.uk](mailto:cjp106@soton.ac.uk). Alternatively, the supervisor of this project, Thanassis Tiropanis may be contacted at [tt2@ecs.soton.ac.uk](mailto:tt2@ecs.soton.ac.uk). Finally, for an independent authority of the study, please contact the Head of Research Governance, Dr Martina Prude (02380 595058, [mad4@soton.ac.uk](mailto:mad4@soton.ac.uk)).

Thank you once more for participating in this research.

Christopher Phethean



## Appendix H

# Codebook for Popular Tweets and Facebook Posts

| Code Number | Description   |
|-------------|---|
| 1           | Informational message                                 |
| 1.1         | Link to relevant content                              |
| 1.1.1       | Link to charity's own site                            |
| 1.1.2       | Link to another site                                  |
| 1.2         | Related to a current campaign                         |
| 1.3         | Reporting an update on relevant work                  |
| 1.3.1       | Positive  |
| 1.3.1.1     | Thankful for supporters' help                         |
| 1.3.2       | Negative  |
| 1.4         | Reporting media attention                             |
| 1.5         | Reporting celebratory attention                       |
| 2           | Topical message relating to the news                  |
| 3           | Seasonal message relating to calendar event           |
| 4           | Informal question to supporters                       |
| 5           | Requesting help from supporters                       |
| 5.1         | Donations (financial)                                 |
| 5.2         | Donations (other)                                     |
| 5.3         | Related action (e.g. rehoming, petition signing etc.) |
| 6           | Directly referring to media content                   |
| 6.1         | Picture <sup>1</sup>                                  |
| 6.2         | Video   |

---

<sup>1</sup>Only posts that directly refer to an image within the text of the message are included. Total number of posts with images may be higher.



|       |  |
|-------|--|
| 7     | Advertising a product e.g. charity gift shop |
| 8     | Promoting a competition                      |
| 9     | Tone <sup>2</sup>                            |
| 9.1   | Formal                                       |
| 9.1.1 | Serious                                      |
| 9.2   | Informal                                     |
| 9.2.1 | Humorous                                     |
| 9.3   | Emotive                                      |
| 9.4   | Authoritative                                |
| 10    | General thanks to supporters                 |
| 11    | Press Release                                |

Table H.1: Popular Post Codes

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<sup>2</sup>This code by itself is never used. A post was only ever assigned a single tone subcode.

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