Assessing the Value of Social Media for Organisations: The Case for Charitable Use

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ABSTRACT

Social media offer opportunities for organisations of all sectors to communicate with their audiences. There is little understanding, however, of what value these services actually provide for many of these organisations. Focusing on the charitable sector, this paper brings together the results of a number of studies into a triangulation whose own results and findings are discussed, and an overall model of value assessment for social media is presented. Emphasis is placed on eliciting the motivations and aims of both the charity and their supporters, along with observing the actual behaviour that then occurs from each side. By comparing these phenomena, and appreciating how they all interact with each other, it is argued that greater understanding around how valuable a particular organisation will find social media can be obtained.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

K.4.0 [**COMPUTERS AND SOCIETY**]: General

General Terms

Management, Measurement, Performance

Keywords

Social media, charities, marketing, communication, web science

1. INTRODUCTION

While undeniably popular, social media present a conundrum for organisations looking to utilise them for marketing purposes. Usage statistics around "active users" suggest that huge numbers of people are present on social media sites, providing a rich pool of potential supporters or advocates for any organisation to engage with. However a number of factors may disguise the true value of these online services and cause confusion around how social media services should be used, what results they create, and where efforts can be improved.

Of particular focus in this paper is the use of social media by charities—organisations that may have limited resources available to commit to managing and maintaining a social media presence. However, these organisations could likely benefit greatly from the networked, interlinked communities and potential for rapidly-spreading viral marketing to develop awareness, drive further engagement and ultimately increase support for the organisation.

This paper seeks to demonstrate how a number of factors determine the value that *could* be produced by using social media technologies by bringing together the findings of a number of studies to produce a value-assessment model for organisations on social media. This goes above and beyond existing services available online that typically provide generic and simplistic measurements focused around 'counts' of activity—for example the number of tweets sent, or retweets received—and instead argues that a more detailed understanding of the context of both the organisation and their supporters is required before any such measurements can be made. More precisely, this model emphasises the elicitation of the motivations and aims of each side (charity and supporter) before comparing these with the observable behaviour that occurs on each side so that the complete story of social media use can be told and assessed.

In order to achieve the aim stated above, this paper is structured as follows. An overview of the background that provides context to the problem of measuring social media is provided, before an overview of previous work papers by the current authors is given. These will be used along with new results to produce an evaluation of how social media value can be viewed and assessed for any one organisation. A model will be presented that brings these various strands together, with an explanation of how each element interlinks with the others and therefore cannot be ignored when analysing a charity's social media use.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Uses of Social Media

Many previous models focus on classifying Twitter users based on their use of the retweet functionality. As an indication of their role in conversations, and as engaging members of a process of communication, this offers some insights. For example, [24] classify users as either idea starters, am-

plifiers, curators or commentators based on how frequently they retweet others, and how often their own content is reposted by others. [2] also examines the Twitter retweet functionality, particularly the motivations behinds its use—by retweeting a user is immersing themselves into the conversation, regardless of what their motivation behind doing so was in the first place. [5] found that the number of followers a user has is not linked to their influence, but that the number of retweets or mentions received by a user can help to indicate the potential to engage their audience. This supports [24]'s classification model focusing on retweets, but also highlights another aspect of communication that is important to measures: mentions. Mentions—including 'replies' on Twitter and comments on Facebook—represent a more immediately obvious form of engaging in conversations as they require more effort than simply liking or re-sharing content; [6] describes Facebook comments as the highest possible level of engagement because of this. [12] propose the "social technographics ladder" to group users based on their level of involvement with social media, with progression achieved by performing actions that represent higher levels of involvement such as publishing original content or posting comments.

The above models focus primarily on individual users on social media. For organisational usage, there is far less existing work. [27] categorised Twitter use by American governmental agencies using the four models of public relations, separating one-way and two-way models to show that one-directional "public information" messages were most popular—although they do admit that these are most favoured for governmental work anyway. For charities—and most sectors of organisation—there is likely to be certain communication patterns which appear regularly, although little has been done previously to elicit these and combine them with knowledge of the organisation's intended strategy, and their ultimate result. [26] analysed the types of message being sent on Twitter, finding that one-way messages for sharing information were used primarily, while [13] elicited three categories of organisational use of Twitter: acting as an information source, building a community, and promoting to and mobilising supporters—the informational source was easily the largest category. These findings suggest that conversation only makes up a small part of any communication strategy on Twitter, despite the fact that receiving textual comments in return could offer the best insights into the engagement of the audience. Therefore, in order to assess the value production of social media, both the technological affordances of social media (the potential for textual comments to demonstrate engagement) and the strategy of the organisation involved must be considered, before analysing the audience's response.

2.2 Online Listeners and Slacktivists

The section above hints at one of the biggest problems with measuring social media use in that not everybody adopts the tools in the same way. In many cases—whether it is an online community or offline—there will be members who do not interact with, contribute to or create original content, and will instead just consume that which is created by others. This figure has been estimated to generally be around the 90% mark, meaning that the vast majority of all community members would be "lurkers" [14]. If this is the case then even despite the technological affordances offered

by social media platforms in the form of commenting and conversations, supporters of an organisation may be disinclined to show engagement in this way, leading to this type of strategy to be unsuccessful. As with the organisation's strategical aims discussed above, the intentions and feelings of the audience need to be understood before the results of such a campaign can be accurately interpreted. [7] claims that due to listening being an essential role in any conversation, the stigmatised phrase 'lurker' should be replaced and re-conceptualised to "listener" in order to more accurately portray the importance of their role. Therefore a lack of apparent engagement may not indicate a failed campaign, especially as people tend to underestimate the size of an audience that becomes exposed to posts by using inaccurate measures such as the amount of feedback received—these do not indicate how may users may have actually been influenced by 'listening' to the post [1].

However, for the remaining users who do show signs of interactions, it is still problematic to try and infer the level of success that a social media campaign has had. [19] describe the phenomenon of "slacktivism" whereby supporters interact on social meia to obtain a good feeling about being involved by carrying out a low-risk or low-cost activity that does not necessarily help the organisation involved. Similar actions are described by [11] as "interpassive behaviour" in contrast to true interactive behaviour. As a real-world example of this problem, UNICEF Sweden recently ran a campaign with the tagline "Likes don't save lives"[1] to highlight the problems caused by this behaviour. Such actions can severely mask the true effects of social media; [15] describes one particular activist movement where the Facebook page for the campaign had over a thousand members, but despite offering them a chance to donate to the cause on the page itself, a single transaction was never recorded. High numbers of supporters on a social media site therefore does not necessarily mean that the marketing has been successful or productive, compared to the goals of the organisation behind it. Despite this, the size of the community may not indicate success, but can have some affect on the perceived credibility of the organisation, so should not be ignored completely [9]—an audience is after all required before they can be engaged or mobilised to produce something more desirable.

2.3 Noteworthy Examples of Charitable Social Media Use

The Kony 2012 campaign—based around a half-hour video documentary released online—is a well known example of what social media can achieve. Becoming the fastest spreading viral video at the time with more than 70 million views in five days [23], the campaign achieved the goal of raising awareness of the warlord Joseph Kony. However, while these viewing figures are staggering, the second part of the campaign, involving physical, offline action—participants were meant to cover cities worldwide with posters related to the campaign—failed to achieve the same levels of success [4], and the ultimate goal of capturing Kony has so far eluded them.

Alternatively, an unplanned and spontaneous example occurred in the UK in March 2014 when the '#nomakeupselfie' hashtag trend helped to raise over £8 million within six days

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[1] http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/facebook/10041713/Likes-dont-save-lives-charity-hits-out-at-Facebook-slacktivists.html

[3]. While this began with individual people posting on social media, Cancer Research UK picked up on the growing trend and began advising the community on how they could help to raise awareness of their work, and increase support via donations [3]. The financial outcome of the campaign suggests that productive action *can* be achieved on social media—however the community-initiated and rapid viral spread elements of this example indicates that there is likely to be a case of quickly gaining the requisite levels of attention within a short window of opportunity. A pertinent course of action for a charity may well be to keep track of what is already happening within the community so that they can take advantage of relevant events when they develop. A similar process led to the 'Ice Bucket Challenge' campaign later in 2014, and in this case even led to other charities attempting to hijack the campaign. [20] claim that the performance of social media fundraising depends on the abilities, preferences and connections of the organisation's supporters, as much as it does on the organisation itself. This can contribute to social media marketing being thoroughly unpredictable—[10] describes its similarities with a game of pinball where the marketing message is served up and diverted by other social media "bumpers" which can significantly change the outcome of the process, while the marketing team attempts to guide it based on their intentions and avoid a marketing crisis.

This paper seeks to alleviate some of the problems and insufficiencies raised in this background section. By producing a model that brings together a number of 'tools' or approaches to gaining insights into particular areas of social media marketing, the authors hope to be able to inspire social media analysts to gain further levels of understanding around the value social media could be producing for an organisation.

3. METHODOLOGY

This paper combines the approaches of previous work to produce an overall synthesis and output that provides further understanding in the area than any single method can provide by itself. The overall research question for this research was to investigate and explore

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

The current paper uses a triangulation approach which is described next, and consists of the methods which are then detailed below.

3.1 Triangulation

A convergent triangulation design was adopted to bring the various strands and studies in this research together. Equal weighting was therefore placed on each qualitative and quantitative data source, and the triangulation process was carried out at the end of the research when the data for each method had been collected. The biggest traditional drawback with this method—the possibility that complementary datasets do not agree on some phenomenon—was largely mitigated by this research design as each method essentially tests a different element of the overall value equation, therefore disparities between them would simply indicate a mismatch between motivations and behaviour—either within the charity itself, or between the charity and their

audience—and this would be a valuable finding to emphasise the lack of grounded strategies or knowledge in this area.

3.2 Semi-structured Interviews

The authors carried out a series of semi-structured interviews with members of the marketing or social media team at five UK-based charities [17]. Thematic analysis of the resulting transcripts was adopted to investigate the common themes that arose from these discussions, identifying patterns in how, why and to what extent the charities used social media services. These were used alongside a structured observation of the charities' Facebook and Twitter profiles to compare the stated uses of social media with what appeared to be happening in reality [17].

3.3 Typological Analysis

In [16] the current authors propose an automated system for classifying the use of social media by charities—focusing on Twitter in this case. Following the background literature described above, it became apparent that in order to assess the value of social media to an organisation, an understanding of what organisations wanted to achieve—and how they were going about doing it—was required. While classification systems had previously been devised to identify *users'* roles in a social network, there was little done to break down the different types or styles of communication that an organisational account may perform. Quantitative data was collected for 39 charities, consisting of a week's worth of tweets sent by their account. This was broken down into proportions of new tweets, replies and retweets, while the numbers of URLs contained in each tweet was also counted. Typological analysis was then carried out on these sets of values to identify a set of initial categories: those charities that were favouring new messages, replying to others, or retweeting others. Majorities in any of these tweet types (over 50%) were the initial classifying criterion, and these were later refined to include other limits such that 8 separate profiles were proposed. An algorithm was developed which could automatically place a charity into one of these categories based on their Twitter data, and this was run on each week of a 30-week period of data for 7 charities to assess their communication style over time.

3.4 Conversation Chain Analysis

For the same 7 charities, and over the same time-period, an analysis of conversation chains was carried out in order to understand the level of responses charities received from their supporters, and to investigate whether social media sites appeared to contribute to the strategy of 'relationship building' [18]. Using data from both Twitter and Facebook allowed the authors to compare this phenomenon across two sites, and to gauge what levels of engagement were actually apparent on these platforms. Data was structured so that it formed chains around 'root posts', which were the initial starting points of a conversation; all following comments or replies were then associated with these posts. Additionally, each member of the community who participated in a conversation was recorded, along with how many posts they made in that same time period, and how many conversations these fell in to.

3.5 Survey

The final strand of work to be brought into this trian-

gulation was the piloting of a survey designed to elicit the motivations of the *supporters* themselves in an effort to improve understanding around what people actually want from organisations in this particular sector on social media. An online survey was designed to query the respondents' views towards various channels of marketing that charities employ and within this to see the level of importance that they placed upon social media. The survey then moved into more detail about how particular social media services were used, and for what reason so that deeper insights could be gained around this issue. With the high numbers of users who do not tend to interact in online communities, as discussed above, this method has advantages as it allows interested supporters to share their views, rather than being limited to an observation of those who do show visible signs of engagement, and therefore provides a novel look at this area which could help to understand further the true value of social media. This survey was carried out as a trial to demonstrate the type of approach that could be followed, and the insights that it could gain, and as such resulted in 94 complete responses, sourced through snowball sampling on Twitter, Facebook and Google+. It is likely that this strategy could be replicated for other sectors: charities were focused upon in this case, but B2B and B2C organisations, activist communities, service organisations, news/journalists and emergency response accounts could all be focused upon with their own take of this approach to provide greater understanding around how the public is likely to respond, and therefore what strategies the organisations involved could use to engage them best.

4. RESULTS OVERVIEW

4.1 How and Why Charities Use Social Media

The interviews revealed a number of themes regarding how charities use social media. The primary output was a breakdown of the aims charities had for these sites, ranging from relationship building and mobilisation to generating referral traffic and sourcing donations—which itself was seen largely as a positive by-product of achieving the other outcomes. The aims appeared to differ between social media sites, with Facebook favoured for relationship building and Twitter preferred for creating awareness and driving traffic to other sites. Charities also suggested that posts containing pictures were particularly engaging and tended to receive more feedback than other formats of post. In general, however, charities admitted that they were finding it difficult to determine the actual value of social media to their organisations because of the lack of methods to track online interaction through to offline action. These results are discussed in more detail in [17].

4.2 Communication Styles Used By Organisations

The typological analysis produced a classification of communication styles that appeared to be adopted by charities on Twitter, consisting of eight different profiles falling into three main categories of responding (primarily replying), gifting (primarily sharing content, either new original content, or retweeting other posts) and mixing (strategies that contained a balanced use of each type of message). This was programmed into an automated algorithm as depicted in Figure 1. Interestingly, when used to analyse charities over
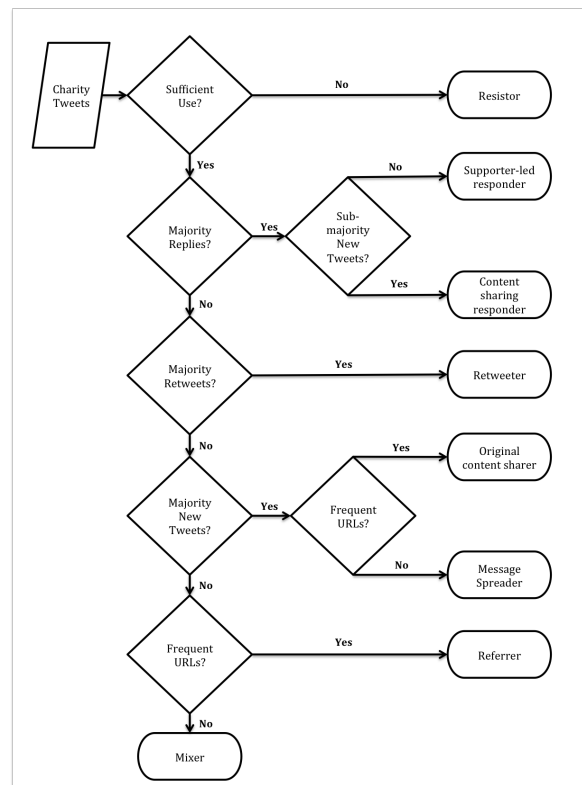

Figure 1: Flow diagram for Twitter conversation classifier algorithm, adapted from [16].

time this algorithm showed that 5 of the 7 charities had at least 22/30 weeks classified as the same category, meaning that they followed a consistent approach to how they used Twitter for communication. In one case, the charity showed no variation at all, and was placed in the same category for all 30 weeks. With such dedicated strategies observable, this opens up possibilities for comparing the charity's own behaviour with their stated intentions (elicited from the interviews above) and with the actual responses that this strategy creates. This could potentially open up a huge number of insights into the value production process of social media.

4.3 Conversation Chain Differences Between Facebook and Twitter

Analysis into the textual responses to charities' posts on social media sites provided interesting findings, the early assessment of which can be found in [18]. This particular strand set out to determine whether there were noticeable differences between how these occurred on Facebook and Twitter, and whether this indicated the extent to which these sites really did reflect engagement and developed relationships. Over the 30-week period analysed, supporters who did interact with a charity tended to do so more on Twitter than on Facebook—that is each interacting supporter performed more interactions on Twitter. However when looking at the responses to charities' own posts on the two sites, there were both more posts (comments) from more supporters on Facebook than on Twitter [18]. However it was remarkable how few supporters did engage over the 30

weeks (in all-but-one cases), and how this very quickly tailed off when looking at those supporters who engaged more than once in that time period (Table 1).

4.4 Supporter's Views on Social Media Use

While the results of the survey are only indicative of what insights could be produced from the suggested approach, and do not form a representative sample, they did indicate some interesting phenomena around charitable supporters on social media. The preliminary indications are that supporters prefer to see social media as a channel to stay informed about the charity's latest work, rather than as a primary method by which to actually interact with them. There were suggestions that supporters did not perceive social media to be a big influential factor in making them decide to act in support of the charity, with a pre-existing interest or connection to the charity's cause a far greater motivation. Where social media did appear to have value was in the regularity by which supportes claimed they received updates on the charities' work—this was more frequent than any other channel and indicates a potentially valuable, albeit subtle, method of influence.

5. TRIANGULATING THE FINDINGS

As the main contribution of this paper, we bring together these studies into an overall triangulation to provide new insights into the value of social media for charities. A number of themes are identified that draw in findings from various strands of this research. This means that the conclusions of this paper are supported not only by single methods but by the process of converging multiple findings together, inline with this form of triangulation.

5.1 Uses of Social Media in the Charitable Sector

The contrasting approaches of the interviews and survey meant that data was available regarding the motivations behind both the charity and their supporters. It was apparent that there was no single strategy charities followed on social media. Instead, it was surprising to find that from a number of different aims—including relationship building, mobilisation and generating referral traffic—that fundraising was only seen as a positive knock-on effect of achieving these. While there were indications that both spreading awareness and encouraging engagement were desired outcomes for the charities, the analysis of charities' communication styles showed that—other than the category representing those charities failing to fully engage with the sites themselves—the most common strategies appeared to be around broadcasting information and referring supporters to other sites. This suggests that on Twitter at least, there was a strong favouring towards developing awareness around the charity's work, rather than actually encouraging conversations and engagement. This classification system could allow organisations in this situation to notice that their own behaviour may not be conducive to achieving their intended aims.

The supporters seemed to suggest different views, however, that may not even be compatible with some of the charities' strategies. While there were indications that social media was seen as an important channel to receive information through, the same can not be said of the belief that it was a platform for engagement that could build relation-

ships. This conflicts with what was stated by the charities themselves as one of their primary aims, highlighting an important difference in the perception of these sites between organisation and supporters, which could potentially have a massive impact on the resulting value that the charity sees produced from their marketing activity. This could suggest why the 'responder' categories of communication were less popular with the charities—if the audience isn't conversing then it is difficult for the charity to respond and generate conversation. The overall trend of this theme therefore is that social media are probably most suited for creating value through spreading awareness, rather than generating engagement or directly inducing charitable action.

5.2 Perceptions on the Best Strategies for Particular Social Media Sites

As mentioned above, there appeared to be a conflict between some of the main aims suggested by the charities—relationship building in particular—and what was observed to be the most popular strategies observed on Twitter: those which developed awareness. Twitter and Facebook were constantly referred to as the most valuable social media channels during the interviews and survey. The interviewees suggested that Facebook was favoured for the relationship building elements of their strategy where more developed and maintained conversations could be carried out, whereas the rapidity of Twitter made it more suitable for generating awareness and pointing supporters back to their websites. Interestingly, however, the supporters sampled in this case by the survey seemed to indicate that Twitter was preferred for interacting with the charities—it could be that this rapidity is precisely the reason the supporters prefer this as it means they *do not* need to enter into a sustained conversation or long-term engagement. The conversation chain analysis itself also produced interesting insights: while Twitter appeared to produce fewer responses and fewer responders to each of the charities' root posts, the users who did interact tended to so more often over a six month period. The suggestion here is that while charities may think that on Facebook there is higher amount of conversations and better performance for relationship building, this is likely coming from higher numbers of supporters interacting a single time, whereas on Twitter there is a small proportion of users interacting but there is more chance that they do so repeatedly. This is particularly interesting as it may highlight one area in which the value of these two sites differs, and where the charities appear to be demonstrating a lack of understanding around the activity on these sites—the methods employed in this research can produce new insights which could help to diminish this problem.

5.3 Indications of Where Social Media is Successful

The methods employed in this research suggest various elements of 'success' on social media in this sector. The interviewees from the charities were cautious about attributing many tangible benefits to social media. There was an indication that they believed it produced some form of added value, particularly around rapid and personal engagement, and creating buzz around what the charity is working on. Insights were gained into this by following the approach of this research and investigating it from multiple perspectives. Supporters indicated that it was important for them to feel

Table 1: Audience Interaction Rates over 30 weeks between June 2013–December 2013 - Facebook Like counts as of 04 Feb 2014, Twitter follower counts as of 05 Feb 2014

Charity	Facebook Likes	Commenters / Likes	FB: Multiple Commenters / Commenters	Twitter Followers	Commenters / Followers	TW: Multiple Commenters / Commenters
DiabetesUK	57834	0.05	0.38	76808	0.15	0.36
Dogs Trust	583569	0.03	0.32	115687	0.18	0.29
Wessex Heartbeat	529	0.05	0.37	586	0.31	0.33
Help For Heroes	324490	0.02	0.26	224259	0.37	0.21
Jeans for Genes	4973	0.10	0.26	12045	1.42	0.27
National Trust	144701	0.06	0.36	210241	0.13	0.37
Woodland Trust	40067	0.07	0.31	48449	0.16	0.31

a part of a charitable community, but it also appeared that it was uncommon for a responder to actually feel strongly involved in one—this suggests an area where charities could improve and for value to potentially be created on social media. Charities may need to focus on improving the way in which the community forms around their organisation, rather than trying to engage supporters directly and individually. In the conversation analysis, low numbers of supporters were shown to actually engage over the 30-week period, demonstrating that supporters just may not want to participate in this way, but this does not mean that they are not interested in what is going on, or in performing actions in support of the organisation. It could therefore be argued that ideas of social media 'slacktivism' are more complicated than simply appearing to overestimate the levels of support a campaign has—interested supporters may not passively engage on social media but this does not mean they will not act in support in an offline or alternate manner.

In terms of features that worked particularly well, it is image-based posts that received a substantial argument in favour of their effectiveness. The interviewees from charities suggested that posts containing pictures received the highest amount of feedback, and this was supported by findings in the conversation chain analysis that showed the largest number of comments in reply to the original post on both Facebook and Twitter. However, whereas image-based posts accounted for 76% of all the charities' posts on Facebook during the timeframe of the study, they only made up 14% of those on Twitter, highlighting again the differences in use for each site, but also possibly revealing a further lack of utilisation of the most engaging features or types of content that could be shared.

6. THE SOCIAL MEDIA VALUE ASSESSMENT MODEL

The triangulated results have so far revealed a number of areas whereby value on social media for charities can be understood. In order to fully understand how 'value' should be determined there must be an appreciation of how each of these elements interrelates with each other—we aim to move beyond simple automated analysis systems that do lit-

tle to understand the context of the organisation and what they're hoping to achieve. It is recognised that it is difficult to pinpoint any specific type or amount of value that can be generalised firstly across all charities, and secondly across all social media sites. The scenario is instead far more complicated: while it seems clear that some sort of value is generated from using social media, it must be described within the context of the organisation before it can really be fully understood and appreciated. As the main contribution of this paper, we present the framework in Figure 2 as a way of bringing together the various strands of this research and showing the role each of the areas focused upon contributes to the overall resulting value on social media. The various elements of this model are based around two categories which each require focus when assessing social media results: intentions and behaviour. The level of consistency between these will play a crucial role in determining the value that a charity receives from social media, and because of the variety of contexts which charities find themselves in, a unique perspective is required for each organisation. We now provide a short description of how each plays a part in the overall value production model.

6.1 Charity's Aim and Strategy

The charity's aim has a strong influence on the perceived value of social media, as depending on what they want to achieve, the resulting value could live up to or fail to meet their expectations. As discussed above, there needs to be enough granularity at this point to cover different strategies for different sites, and as shown on the model these must then be compared to their actual behaviour on the sites through methods such as the typological communication profiling discussed in this paper. The precursory desires of small business adoption of social media has been discussed before: [21] focuses on the organisation's context—such as their competence with technology and pressure from customers—while [8] concentrates on the intended outcomes such as idea generation and relationships; we emphasise that both of these factors must be considered.
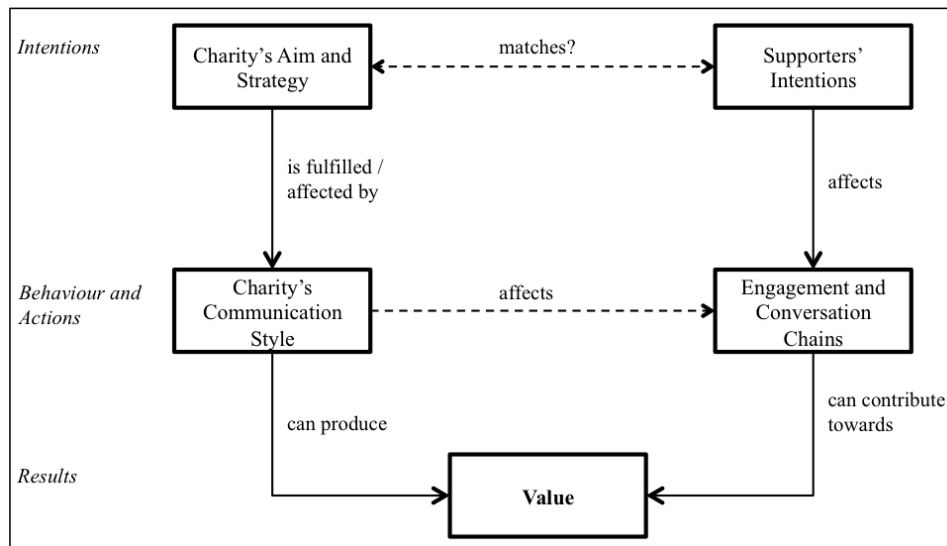
6.2 Supporters' Intentions

Figure 2: Proposed framework for establishing value creation on social media.

Similarly, the intentions and underlying motivations of the supporters themselves will play a huge role in determining what value can be produced for a particular charity on social media. There is the potential possibility that the charity's hopes of engaging with supporters may conflict with what the supporters actually want from the charity, and so it could be difficult for the charity to obtain the levels of value that they desire. The charity or analyst therefore needs to understand this side of the equation—as well as knowing what the charity wants to achieve. Powerful and effective campaigns such as the Ice Bucket Challenge discussed earlier show that incredible value is possible from social media, yet these appear to be difficult to instigate and rely primarily on the will of the supporters who choose to engage.

6.3 Charity's Communication Style

Assessing the communication of the charity is important to ascertain whether or not the stated strategies for social media have manifested themselves into reality in the form of actual communication. If not, then value could still be produced but may differ from what was initially desired and therefore not live up to the charity's expectations. The classification system designed in this work has revealed a number of different communication styles appear to be adopted by charities, and these should each be considered in terms of what they could produce as a result, and whether or not this algins with the charities' own aims.

6.4 Engagement and Conversation Chains

The communication patterns of supporters both reflects and is affected by the intentions of the supporters themselves, and by the way in which the charity goes about communicating on social media. This phase represents the engagement that the charity receives in return for all their own work on social media and therefore can have a strong bearing on whether or not the charity feels it has met its expectations. Gaining access to these insights is necessary for the charity to know whether or not its strategies are working. However it must be acknowledged that many supporters will choose not to show engagement in such an observable way

and yet cannot be ignored when considering the potential value created by social media. Therefore, as discussed earlier, an understanding of the supporters' intentions is crucial to be able to make some form of prediction around how much visible engagement to expect.

6.5 Value and Contribution of the Model

The model depicted in Figure 2 proposes a way of representing how crucial each of the above elements is in regards to the assessment of value for an organisation on social media. It focuses equally on the charity itself and their supporters, and likewise focuses on the actual behaviour just as much as it does the motivations and premeditating reasons for using the sites in the first place. By not taking into account any of the four factors described here, the organisation would only be making unsubstantiated claims about their social media presence, and would lack any real insights into whether what they are currently doing is suitable for them, or their audience. One of the primary arguments around this is that based on what the charity wants to achieve, there will be different types of communication and behaviour on these sites that will give them a chance of actually achieving it— the first step in analysing their outputs should be to check that their communication strategy does actually align with what they hope to get out. Fundamental to this analysis is that each case is treated on an individual basis: the intentions, sector and cultural basis of each charity will mean that their situation is unique and must therefore be analysed with this in mind. Trying to calculate generic measures around activity on social media and claim whether an organisation is "successful" or not, without knowing any of their goals or their situation will only lead to further confusion around what value social media can actually produce.

7. DISCUSSION

The value of social media to charitable organisations is a complex matter, as exemplified by the variety of methods by which this paper has presented as a means to try and produce greater insights. As social media become ever

more popular, the assumption that any organisation should have some form of presence on them will grow—this paper has shown evidence for their value at generating awareness around particular issues. Assessing the value of each social media channel will be unique to each organisation due to the nature of their context, scope and motivations for using them in the first place. Tools which attempt to automate social media analysis will therefore be limited in what they can actually say about whether social media is 'working' for an organisation. However we have presented a number of stages and tools that could be used together in order to produce greater understanding and awareness about a particular charity's social presence.

It is interesting that the interviewees representing the charities were all fairly positive in their assessment of social media receiving public attention and attention. However the conversation chain analysis showed that only a small number of supporters actually engaged over a 30-week period, and this is supported by existing literature around 'lurkers' in online communities. Those who do engage clearly create a positive impression on those charities that indicates the platforms could be productive and interactive. Perhaps the difficulty in ascertaining how much value is actually produced by this engagement is because it comes from such a small portion of the entire audience. Regardless of this, the interactions that they perform as contributions to the community will create some value as other more reserved supporters may place increased levels of trust in the organisation, and potentially lead to a stronger relationship [22] [25].

[20] claims that converting supporters from 'liking' content to donating is one of the main challenges on social media, but the survey responses suggested that supporters are most influenced by their own inherent interests anyway. If this is the case then they may already have existing donation patterns, which social media campaigning would have little chance of changing—is the issue therefore really in getting more social media supporters to donate, or that the social media audience is those who are already donors anyway? The strongest suggestion from this research is that social media are most suited to spreading awareness of the charities' work, and so it is in this area where there is probably the most potential for value—in the current circumstances. Social media provide an opportunity that no other communication channel can offer—a method through which they can release weekly, and sometimes more regular, updates to supporters for virtually no cost. This improves on costly offline alternative such as newsletters, and also allows any supporter responses or engagement to be viewed publicly to improve the image of the organisation, unlike other popular electronic channels such as email.

7.1 Limitations

By carrying out an investigative approach for this research, we have not tried to establish the actual quantity of value produced by social media services. By not measuring the success of any particular strategy, this work has not shown concretely whether a social media presence and subsequent activity can be tracked through to be the underlying cause of someone acting in support of a charity. However we have instead focused on and addressed several important steps that could help with this process, and which could increase the understanding in this area. This was a method-

ological decision, and was deemed necessary due to the need to improve this level of understanding and awareness.

As discussed before, the survey results at this point are somewhat limited, and concrete assertions can not be made from what the early pilot results suggest. However as an indication that is triangulated with other data sources and findings in this work, their insights are interesting. We see a large amount of potential for this survey approach to be rolled out by charities to get more substantial and representative findings. Scaling this up and using the results in combination with the conversation chain analysis could help to build a rigorous argument around how sizeable and productive an online community actually is. This could also be adapted to other sectors to investigate the potential for social media use by organisations such as those in emergency and disaster response (how do people view social media in these circumstances, and what type of activity do they want to see) or in the news or journalism business (for example, how do readers want to take in information, through tweet summaries or links to longer articles?). Carrying out this research in a rigorous manner could help organisations ensure that they are targeting their social media activity in the correct way to induce the best possible outcomes.

Along with the survey, the interviews—while providing rich qualitative data—place an inherent reliance on self-reported behaviour, and this work is built largely around those findings initially presented in [17]. However the methodological choice to triangulate these findings with observations of what is actually occurring on social media sites goes some way to mitigating this, and ensures that any claims in this research are backed up by the convergence of numerous data sources.

7.2 Final Remarks

By triangulating a number of methods, this paper has provided a number of insights into where and how value is produced on social media for organisations in the charitable sector. Taking these findings, a model has been produced which integrates each of these areas to show that they must all be appreciated before an assessment or analysis of value can take place. The charity's narrative for marketing on social media should follow several important steps: firstly the organisation should have a strategy in mind and some outcomes that they aspire to reach—this should take into account what they know about their audience and how they feel about engaging through these channels; there should then be a plan of how they need to communicate on these services in order to produce the opportunities that could create their desired outcomes, and this needs to be tracked and analysed throughout to ensure that the charity is at least giving themselves a chance of succeeding; and then finally there needs to be an assessment of what results are produced and the amount of reaction that is caused should be measured in order to determine the effects of the campaign. Avoiding any of these steps will leave significant gaps in the knowledge about social media's true value to the organisation. This make it imperative that each organisation is analysed independently and in appreciation of their own context—without this any measurements will be shallow and of limited use.

8. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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