

Chapter 4

Social Media and NPOs: An Integrative Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

The nonprofit sector has been growing around the world. In addition, non-profit organizations (NPOs) are an essential piece of a healthy society. It's undeniable that NPOs (also known as voluntary, independent third sector, or nongovernmental societal sectors) are a relevant part of our society. The activities of fundraising are vital. Following the digital transformation, NPOs have operated in a digital context. These organizations need digital marketing strategies, since the competition is high. This chapter was written with the purpose of elucidating the following research questions: which is the actual state of the art regarding the use of social media marketing in NPOs? In the midst of the various social media tools, which are the ones most successful for NPOs, regarding securing donors and fundraising goals? A qualitative approach was elected, involving an integrative literature review, from 2013 to 2021. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. The authors hope to contribute to a synthesis of knowledge and applicability of results of significant studies into practice.

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze, on the one hand, what is the current state of the art regarding the use of social media marketing by NPOs and, on the other hand, to identify, among the various social media tools and strategies, which are the most successful for NPOs in terms of securing donors and achieving fundraising goals.

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The authors believe that social media and NPOs is an area of knowledge with a rapidly growing body of literature that has not benefited from a comprehensive review and update over an extended period of time.

To fulfil the above intentions, the available literature on the subject (both original studies and theoretical reviews and case reports, from 2013 to 2023) was considered to understand the nuances of various aspects of digital marketing strategies related to NPOs.

It's undeniable that non-profit organisations (also known as voluntary, independent third sector or non-governmental social sectors) are an important part of our society. These organizations operate in the market and don't pursue profit, but the well-being of society, and their founders and shareholders do not receive a share of the profits (Milla et al., 2018).

It's interesting to note that characteristics such as trust, solidarity, reciprocity and cohesion are part of non-profit social networks (Atouba & Shumate, 2020; Bixler & Springer, 2018; McPherson et al., 2001 cit. in. Oliveira et al., 2021).

The truth is that not-for-profit organizations (NPOs) live with the resources they receive from government agencies and private donors. These organizations should then use their resources strategically to achieve their mission-related goals (Richter et al., 2019 cit. in. Gartner et. al., 2021).

With the acceleration of digital transformation, NPOs are increasingly operating in a digital context (Gartner et. al, 2021).

In the early 1990s, communication via the Internet was one-way. Consumers could not express their feedback in real time, nor could they spread their message for a cause (Milla et al., 2017).

In this sense, social media sites have helped in this digitization process by increasing the level of networking and interactivity with friends and donors (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012).

Moreover, according to Gartner et al. (2021), the existing knowledge, experience and skills from traditional marketing have not lost their value in the context of digital transformation and can still be applied in a digital environment. The principles of service marketing regarding the positive impact of brand trust on service quality are still valid in the era of social media (p. 584).

2. METHODOLOGY

An integrative literature review is proposed in order to gain an overall understanding of the current state of the art in the use of social media marketing by NPOs and, more specifically, which are the most successful social media tools and strategies.

An integrative review is a specific review method that critiques and synthesizes literature in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of a specific topic (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005). In this sense, the use of literature review is chosen to answer specific research questions about a topic (Torraco, 2016). These research questions define the boundaries of the literature to be reviewed and the issues to be investigated. As a bibliographic search was carried out, the following sources of academic and scientific research were used: Academic Search Complete, Web of Science, Business Source Complete (EBSCO), Coimbra University Press, Elsevier, Sage Premier, Springer, Taylor & Francis, Wiley, Teacher Reference Center (EBSCO) and also Google Scholar.

The descriptors and their combinations in English used to search the articles were as follows: "non-profit organizations - NPOs", "digital marketing", "digital marketing and non-profit organizations - NPOs". In general, a comprehensive search for an integrative review identifies the maximum number of eligible primary sources using at least two to three strategies (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005).

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