A STUDY OF THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENTS IN NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

by

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A STUDY OF THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENTS
WITHIN NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study is a close examination of the importance of three topics: social media, celebrity endorsements and nonprofit organizations. Extensive secondary research was conducted to better understand the relationship between nonprofits and celebrity endorsements, nonprofits and social media, and social media and celebrity endorsements. Primary research was conducted using a content analysis approach to understand how nonprofit organizations use social media. Two nonprofits were chosen: the LiveStrong Foundation and UNHCR. The Twitter and Facebook feeds of the two organizations were analyzed for two consecutive months, in order to determine the relationship between the amount of engagement of posts and the type of post. The research showed that the majority of posts had a neutral tone and were informational in nature. An engagement variable was then created to look at the relationship between the amount of engagement of posts and characteristics such as the tone, topic area and nonprofit strategy.

Posts including a visual aspect such as a photo or video gained higher levels of engagement, as did posts with a positive tone and those that included a reference to a celebrity. Although the majority of posts were informational, posts that were categorized as community-based received the most engagement, while action-based posts received the least amount of engagement.
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INTRODUCTION

There is no denying the impact of social media (SM) on our society, especially when looking at the effect it has on companies trying to market their brands. As of 2014, 97 percent of marketers surveyed indicated that they use SM in their business, and 56 percent have been using some form of SM for two or more years (Stelzner 2014). These statistics are astounding when the relative newness of SM is considered in comparison to traditional forms of media. SM has also allowed for a more personal and simple approach to celebrity endorsements, as well as a way for nonprofits to effectively reach followers and build strong communities online.

This study aims to examine how nonprofit organizations use celebrity endorsements and social media, as well as the relationship between the amount of engagement on posts and the specific elements of the posts. Three research questions guided this thesis:

*RQ1: Is there a relationship between the amount of engagement (likes, favorites, retweets, shares, comments) and the topic area of posts?*

*RQ2: Is there a relationship between the amount of engagement and the tone of the posts?*

*RQ3: Is there a relationship between the amount of engagement and the presence of added elements such as a hashtag, mention, photo, video or article?*
LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media

SM carries significant value for companies in terms of building awareness and customer interaction. 92% of marketers indicate that SM is extremely important for their business. This statistic is up from 82% in 2013 (Stelzner 2014). In this day and age, it is important that companies have some level of online presence in order to generate awareness among consumers and retain loyalty among existing customers. By 2011, approximately 83% of Fortune 500 companies were using some form of SM to connect with consumers, and research suggests that consumers are relying on SM as a way to gather information about new or unfamiliar brands (Naylon, Lamberton, West 2012). In order to effectively reach these consumers and give them the information they seek, a multifaceted strategy that balances overt promotions with natural engagement must be utilized (Harland 2014).

Traditionally, consumers used the Internet to simply expend content: they read it, they watched it, and they used it to buy products and services (Kietzmann et al. 2011). The late 1990s saw a popularity surge in home pages, where anyone could share information about his or her private life, a bit like a blog today. SM sites and services started forming, and with them an increasing amount of competition for each new site. In 1997, Sixdegrees was created which allowed users to create profiles, list their friends, and add friends-of-friends to their own lists (Kietzmann et al 2011). Friendster was another popular social networking site that took rise a few years before Facebook came into the picture in 2004, which was quickly bombarded with new competitors and clones. Michael Birch, best known for selling Bebo to AOL and later buying it back, launched Ringo.com three
days after hearing about Friendster, later describing it as "a copycat site of Friendster" (Feigerman 2014). Google launched Orkut, a failed early attempt at a social network, in January 2004 after attempting a Friendster acquisition. Even one of Friendster's investors, future Zynga founder Mark Pincus, launched a social networking competitor in 2003 called tribe.net (Feigerman 2014). The influx of so much competition, along with technological issues that many of the startups such as Friendster faced, led to the quick takeover of a few main social networks, such as Facebook and MySpace (Fiegerman 2014). Facebook was able to take advantage of opportunities and move to the forefront to become the dominant SM site that we know today. In today’s market, there are a few large sites that dominate the market, rather than many startups that were seen in the early 2000’s. Facebook has become the world’s largest social networking site with 864 million daily active users and 703 million mobile daily active users (Facebook 2014). Similarly, Twitter has 284 million monthly active users and 500 million Tweets are sent per day (Twitter 2014).

Though the term SM is widely used, it is not necessarily widely understood. A few definitions are key to understanding what exactly constitutes SM. First, the term Web 2.0 is a term that was first used in 2004 to describe a new way in which software developers and end-users started to refer to blogs, wikis and collaborative projects, and is considered to be the platform for the evolution of SM. It is a platform in which content is created, modified and updated by users rather than a single individual. Web 2.0 has a semantic nature that allows users to give meaning to content beyond what the brand would have done for itself, by spreading awareness through interaction with the brand. User Generated Content (UGC) refers to “the sum of all ways in which people make use of Social Media” (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010, pp. 61). This includes all the various forms of
media content that are created by users, published on a publicly accessible site and has been created outside of professional routines and practices.

With these concepts in mind, a straightforward definition of SM can be used, which is “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of UGC” (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010). Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) relied on a set of theories in order to classify SM, including social presence, media richness, self-presentation and self-disclosure. These theories allowed for the classification of six types of technology according to their level of: social presence, media richness, self-presentation and self-disclosure.

Self-presentation/self-disclosure is defined as any “type of social interaction people have the desire to control the impressions other people form of them” (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010, p. 62), while social presence/media richness is defined as “the acoustic, visual, and physical contact that can be achieved – that allows to emerge between two communication partners” (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010, p. 61). Both constructs are measured on a spectrum from low to high. Nonprofit organizations utilizing social media to build their brands must take both self-presentation/self-disclosure and social presence/media richness into consideration when building a community online. Because all nonprofits serve a specific cause, they must be sure they represent their organization in a way that is appealing to potential donors. The image presented online must be consistent with the overall image of the nonprofit. The organization also must have a level of self-disclosure that allows their audience to feel connected to the cause they are supporting.
The six technologies of SM include: blogs, social networking sites (e.g. Facebook), virtual social worlds (e.g. Second Life), collaborative projects (e.g. Wikipedia), content communities (e.g. YouTube) and virtual game worlds (e.g. World of Warcraft). As shown in the chart below, blogs are high in self-presentation/self-disclosure but low in social presence/media richness, while social networking sites are classified as medium in social presence/media richness and high in self-presentation/self-disclosure. (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010).

![Table 1. Classification of Social Media by social presence/media richness and self-presentation/self-disclosure](image)

For nonprofit organizations looking to capitalize on SM benefits, the most effective topographies would be blogs, social networking sites and content communities. Blogs can be used to post original content related to the particular cause, or update the public on new events or exciting news related to the organization. Social networking sites can be used to engage with key stake holders and supporters of the organization in order to form a strong community and let the target audience feel included in updates and news related to the cause. Content communities such as YouTube may also be used in order to share videos with the public. Nonprofits such as the Livestrong Foundation have capitalized on all of these types of SM by posting frequent blog articles, engaging with the community on Facebook and Twitter, and sharing videos on YouTube.
SM can be a great help to companies for many reasons. It can be used to promote the product, to let the company become more closely tied to their customers, and to provide content to communities in the form of information or entertainment. SM can also be leveraged as an observation tool which allows companies to collect information about their customers (Reisenwitz 2013). It can also be used to build loyalty among consumers. Of marketers surveyed who have been using SM for at least 1 year, 69% found it useful for building a loyal fan base (Stelzner 2014).

According to Harland (2014), a little more than half of the Internet users surveyed said they visit SM websites on a daily basis, and the most frequent SM users showcase greater receptiveness to social advertising and brand interaction. More than one third of networkers regularly use SM for product and brand research. As seen in the below graph, 57% reported using brand’s website, 37% using SM websites, and 23% using organization’s blog when searching for product and brand information.

Social networks are what most people think of when they think of SM. Examples of social networks include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube to name a few.
Facebook has so far maintained its dominance as the leading social network for consumers, especially in terms of daily usage. About two thirds of networkers visit Facebook on at least a daily basis, and the high likelihood of daily Facebook usage spans generations, with more than half of men and women aged 55 and older visiting the site daily (Harland 2014). YouTube ranks second when considering daily usage, with 29% of networkers reporting they visit the site at least once per day. This number is likely to rise alongside increases in mobile device adoption, considering that 39% of networkers who primarily use a smartphone for social media visit YouTube at least once per day (Harland 2014). As far as social media use by marketers, the top seven platforms include: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, blogging, Google+ and Pinterest (Stelzner 2014). It stands to reason that the top used sites for consumers would also be within the top used sites for companies attempting to target these consumers. Facebook is likely the top used site because of its ranking when considering the classification of SM. Facebook ranks high on self-presentation/self-disclosure and medium on social presence/media richness, as the chart on page 4 shows. This means that Facebook is a good option for companies and nonprofits seeking to successfully reach their audience and keep a consistent image and presence online.

With these statistics in mind, organizations must decide how to leverage social media to their advantage, by positioning their product or brand in center-stage online through the use of SM networks listed above. SM is more open, more grassroots and more organic than traditional marketing, and thus the research, planning, implementation strategies and tactics are new and and different (Baker 2009). Many consumers prefer to base their decision on a service provider using information from friends and other per-
sonal contacts as opposed to the company itself. SM can be used to facilitate positive word-of-mouth advertising, which may help solidify the purchase decision for those types of consumers (Reisenwitz 2013). In other words, organizations can utilize SM networks to create a space where consumers can hear information directly from the organization, share opinions with others, and start conversations with the community.

This idea of sharing of opinions can be both positive and negative. In a positive light, it can generate word-of-mouth advertising, as mentioned above. However, it also creates an entirely new issue for organizations to face, which is dealing with negative comments that may arise. “As you tune into the dialog, you will find some ‘haters’. You will also find advocates: people who adore your product, want you to succeed, wish you well and defend you against the haters” (Baker 2009, pp. 4). It is important for organizations to listen to the conversations surrounding the brand to figure out exactly what is being said, and by whom. Analyzing the perceived characteristics of the brand, as well as the perceived characteristics of the competition’s brand will aid in approaching effective social media strategies. There are opportunities to be found with both audiences, people who love and hate your product, such as rewarding advocates for their loyalty and engaging influential critics directly and transparently to turn them into advocates (Baker 2009).

Another roadblock companies encounter when utilizing social media is the ability to measure their social media activities and gage the return on investment for such activities. According to Stelzner, about one in three (37%) stated that they are able to effectively measure their social activities. Though this may not seem like a high number, this is compared to only 26% who indicated they could measure ROI when surveyed in 2013 (Stelzner 2014). Though the ability to effectively measure activities may not be apparent
for some, a significant 68% of marketers surveyed by Stelzner said that they do at least attempt to analyze social media activities. The chart below shows the percentage in agreement with the statement “I regularly analyze my social activities” (Stelzner 2014).

Looking to the future, marketers plan to increase usage of certain areas, including blogging, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook in that order (Stelzner 2014). While consumers have shown that they are willing to consider advertisements and other branded content, a much smaller share report that advertising has led them directly to make a purchase. This suggests that ads can help build awareness, but getting the most out of the social platform requires deeper involvement from the brand, with a focus on empowering the user with meaningful and relevant information (Harland 2014). Nonprofits must remember to utilize SM in a way that will make them stand out and present the overall message clearly, striving to keep a high level of both self-presentation and social presence.
Celebrity Endorsements

Celebrity endorsement (CE) is a widely used marketing communication strategy that can help set a brand apart from competition and create high recall rates (Ohanian 1991). CE has been defined as: ”any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement” (McCracken 1989). Celebrity endorsers are seen as dynamic, containing both likable and attractive qualities that are often transferred to the brand in the mind of the consumer (Atkin and Block 1983). However, though these benefits are evident, when examined more closely the use of celebrity endorsements can cause potential hazards as well should the celebrity’s image suddenly change, or a scandal ensue (Erdogan 1999). Companies have little control over a celebrity’s persona which can cause issues if their actions do not line up with the brand’s values (Tom et al. 1992).

CE has been used since the late nineteenth century, most notably with Queen Victoria’s association with Cadbury’s Cocoa (Sherman 1985). The rise of CE owes a lot to the emergence of cinema and commercial radio in the 1930’s, as well as radio in the 1950’s. However, the supply of celebrities in those days was extremely limited due to the idea that stars should not waste their time on TV and radio as brand promoters, at the risk of ruining their image by supporting the wrong brands (Kaikati 1987). From the 1970’s on, the fear of being shamed has dwindled due to the expanding number of film and TV roles, thus advertisers have been given more choices in CE options (Erdogan 1999).

In today’s intense marketing environment, where it is difficult to differentiate products technologically, celebrities play an increasingly important role in advertising as a tool for creating and enhancing brand image and equity. Empirical evidence indicates
approximately 20-25% of advertisements involve a celebrity as an endorser (Sliburyte, 2009). Creating effective interactions between consumers and endorsers is one of the main concerns for companies using endorsements (Bright and Cunningham 2012). Given the risks associated with the selection of inappropriate celebrities and the large sums of money invested in this type of advertising, it is imperative for advertisers to understand consumer responses to CE and develop an effective approach for the selection of endorsers (Choi and Rifon 2012).

In many ways, the rise of SM in today’s society has allowed CE to become easier and more personal. Celebrities can take to SM to address fans directly and appear more humanized than they do on traditional media vehicles. Celebrities can also utilize social media to manage their reputations and create a positive public image, which will in turn help create a positive image for the brand being endorsed (Greer 2009). Use of SM with CE also gives advertisers a direct line to celebrities’ fan followings via their personal Twitter accounts and Facebook pages, granting them a higher level of exposure and awareness that comes with the fan base of celebrities (Beltrone, 2013).

As mentioned above, there are many potential risks as well as benefits that companies face when using CE. The below chart from Erdogan (1999) outlines the possible advantages, hazards and preventative tactics that come into play with CE. For example, an advantage may be increased attention on the brand thanks to the memorability of the celebrity, which may in turn cause the celebrity to overshadow the actual brand. A possible preventive tactic would be pre-testing the effects of the celebrity and carefully planning the strategy in order to ensure that the brand itself is top of mind, not the celebrity.
Public controversy is perhaps one of the biggest detriments to CE, especially when looking at nonprofit organizations that have a clear image and reputation to uphold. Embarrassment and even loss of funding has been a result for companies whose endorser was caught in the middle of a public scandal (Erdogan 1999). An example of this is the Livestrong Foundation and the backlash that came from Lance Armstrong’s public doping scandal, which will be discussed further in the nonprofit organization section of this paper.

From the above hazards and risks associated with CE, it is clear that the selection of the endorser is crucial for success. When selecting a celebrity endorser, companies should focus on these main areas: credibility, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and celebrity-product congruence (Sliburyte 2009). A few models can be used to assist in finding an endorser that possesses these key elements, including the Source Credibility Model, Source Attractiveness Model, and the Product Match-Up Hypothesis (Erdogan 1999).
The Source Credibility Model deals with the level of credibility and trustworthiness an endorser possesses. "Source credibility" is a term commonly used to imply a communicator's positive characteristics that affect the receiver’s acceptance of a message (Ohanian 1991). A celebrity endorser who is perceived as an expert on the product or brand is more convincing and more likely to produce a positive attitude towards the brand (Sliburyte 2009). Studies have found that this model may be the most important area to focus on for companies, as consumers are more likely to be impacted by an endorser that exhibits trustworthiness, credibility and expertise, as opposed to simply being attractive (Bright, Cunningham 2012). Trustworthiness refers to the honesty, integrity and believability of an endorser, and depends on the perceptions of the target audience. A celebrity who is widely regarded by the target audience to be dependable, honest and believable is the best choice for a company seeking to utilize CE. Untrustworthy endorsers are seen as questionable message sources by consumers, regardless of any positive quality they may possess (Smith 1973).

Expertise is another key factor when looking at the Source Credibility Model. A celebrity that is seen as being an expert by the target audience, regardless of whether or not they are actually an expert on the product, is seen as more persuasive and can produce higher brand recall (Erdogan 1999). Though many might regard source credibility as highly subjective, research shows that there is a high degree of agreement among individuals in regard to assessing credibility. Though an individual’s judgments of credibility are naturally subjective, the judgments are shaped through Gestalt principles of person perception rather than by single characteristics. Therefore, if a significant number of peo-
ple rate an endorser as low or high in credibility, the endorser will represent the rated level of credibility for research purposes (Erdogan 1999).

The Source Attractiveness Model represents the idea that endorsers have been chosen on the basis of their physical attractiveness in order to appeal to the target audience, as people tend to form positive stereotypes about attractive people (Erdogan 1999). Physically attractive people have also been known to be more effective at changing beliefs and generating purchase decisions of consumers as opposed to unattractive counterparts (Chaiken 1979; Friedman et al. 1976). However, attractiveness does not simply include physical attributes, but also encompasses similarity, familiarity and liking of the endorser (McGuire 1985). This means that if there is a resemblance between the endorser and target audience, if the audience is already knowledgeable about the endorser, and there is an affection toward the endorser, the affects of the endorsement will be much stronger (Erdogan 1999). However, according to the study by Bright and Cunningham (2012), organizations may want to invest more time in finding an endorser who has credibility, expertise and trustworthiness, over one who is simply attractive or popular. The results showed physical attractiveness had a weaker impact on attitude towards athlete endorsements than source trustworthiness, expertise and credibility of an athlete endorser.

Another important part of selecting the perfect endorser is the Product Match-Up Hypothesis, which explains that messages conveyed by the celebrity and the product message should line up. In other words, the celebrity and the brand should be perceived as a good “fit” for one another by the target audience (Misra 1990). As the “match up” between endorser and brand increases, so does the positive attitude of the audience towards product and endorser (Bright & Cunningham 2012). This finding is especially im-
important for nonprofit organizations, which tend to have very specific messages and an
important reputation to uphold. Regardless of the strength of association consumers per-
ceive between the celebrity endorser and the product, negative information about celebri-
ty endorsers can put a firm’s products and image at risk (Sliburyte 2009). If the celebrity
does not possess the same image or hold the same values as the nonprofit, or if a scandal
occurs that causes a divide between the two images, this can cause the endorsement to
seem invalid, and even put the future of the organization in jeopardy.

According to research done at Rutgers–Camden, the use of CE can benefit non-
profits by aiding in the increase of both awareness and donations, as well as by offering a
credibility signal to donors. Just as celebrities bring attention to products, they can bring
attention to good causes as well, by creating image-related links on the basis of attrac-
tiveness, expertise and trustworthiness. Celebrities are thought to add credibility to non-
profit organizations, especially if there is a perceived match-up between the celebrity and
the cause they are supporting (Rutgers-Camden 2013).

As mentioned above, studies have found that the Source Credibility Model may
be the most important factor for companies considering CE (Bright, Cunningham 2012).
This holds true for nonprofit organizations, which must be sure to gain the trust of their
target audience and key stakeholders in order to acquire funding. The credibility, expe-
tise and trustworthiness of the endorser in question must be considered if a nonprofit ex-
pects to successfully use CE. As the Rutgers-Camden (2013) article stated, CE can help
nonprofits appear more credible and trustworthy if the celebrity possesses all of the cru-
cial components, including being widely regarded as a trustworthy and credible spokes-
person who has a clear tie to the organization being endorsed.
Nonprofit organizations

Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) contribute to society by emphasizing the importance of social values as opposed to the economic values typically represented by for-profit organizations (Katalinić, 2011). The ultimate strategic goal is fulfillment of a social mission—the creation of public value (Nah & Saxton, 2013). In order to be successful, NPOs need to focus on their mission and people, be aware of client needs and expectations, and create new values and social innovations. Unlike profit organizations, which start with a concept of business logic and are oriented towards a specific idea, NPOs start with a socially oriented mission and then form specific activities surrounding people, volunteers and resources. NPOs must take into account the characteristics of volunteers, measure results and manage and define the organizational mission. Employees must be well-educated on the mission of the organization and how to achieve the goals set out for the organization in order to live out the mission (Katalinić 2014).

According to Grant and Crutchfield (2007), many of the commonly held beliefs about what makes NPOs successful are shown to be false, such as that they need perfect management, a textbook mission statement, large budgets and a breakthrough new idea. The real secret is how they mobilize every sector of society: government, business, nonprofits, public. In the study, Grant and Crutchfield (2007) showed that many high-impact NPOs focus more on work outside their organization as opposed to management internally. The six main practices used to achieve impact are: 1) Serve and Advocate, 2) Make Markets Work, 3) Inspire Evangelists, 4) Nurture Nonprofit Networks, 5) Master the Art of Adaptation, and 6) Share Leadership. Organizations do not necessarily use all six, and do not always use them in the same ways. Organizations also need to employ basic man-
agement strategies such as developing enduring, somewhat diversified sources of financial support, including large individual donor bases, government contracts, corporate donations, and foundation grants. In order for real change to occur, government leaders and business leaders must recognize NPOs as valuable sources of social innovation and policy ideas, and help support the organizations (Grant and Crutchfield, 2007).

The rise of SM has brought new opportunities for NPOs to communicate with and engage the public. The ability for any organization – no matter how small – to adopt new technologies presents substantial opportunities for a more level playing field (Nah & Saxton, 2013). Sites like Facebook and Twitter have built-in interactivity, and allows any organization to build a following and utilize new media in their favor (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). To see whether organizations are tapping into this potential, Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) examined how large U.S. NPOs use Twitter to engage with the public and their core stakeholders.

Through the study, Lovejoy & Saxton (2012) found 12 types of tweets and three major functions: Information, Community, and Action. ‘Information’ involves spreading information about the organization, its activities and anything else that may be of potential interest to followers. This function differs from the others in that it is a one-way information exchange with the sole purpose being to inform, with no explicit secondary agenda such as promotion of an event or development of a community. ‘Community’ involves creating relationships, networks and communities on twitter. It includes two main aspects, dialogue and community-building. These tweets spark interactive conversations between the public and the organization, and can also strengthen ties to the online community without expectation of an interactive conversation. Examples include giving
recognition and thanks to donors, responses to public reply messages, and acknowledgment of current and local events. ’Action’ plays into trying to get the audience to do something, such as donate, attend an event or join a movement. This is probably the most tangible and outcome-oriented function, taking advantage of the benefits offered by having a Twitter presence. Examples of action function include promotion of an event, donation appeal, calling for volunteers and employees and lobbying for a cause (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012).

In the below chart, Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) showed organizations’ reliance on each of the three functions of Twitter, examining organizations that were considered “active” (sending at least three tweets per week). It is apparent that the majority of organizations are Information-focused, while only eight of the organizations were primarily ‘Community Builders’. There are three organizations (located directly on the left edge of the triangle) that have a mix of tweets that are informational and action-oriented, but none that are community-building; similarly, there are six organizations (located on the right edge) whose tweets are a mix of information and community but not action. However, there are none located on the lower edge of the triangle, indicating that none of the organizations send out only a mix of community-building and action-oriented tweets (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012).
Along with SM, CE has become a popular trend for NPOs (Garcia de los Salmones, Dominguez and Herrero, 2013). Garcia De Los Salmones et. al (2013) performed a survey of 329 adults who rated a fictitious ad with a celebrity without perceived experience in the non-profit area. The results showed that the celebrity’s credibility depends on the fit perceived, the attribution of altruistic motivation, the celebrity image and the general attitude towards celebrity activism. Furthermore, they found that a credible celebrity has a strong influence on the attitude towards the advertisement and, indirectly, on the behavioral intentions of the audience. As was mentioned in the CE section of this paper, CE can help nonprofits appear more credible and trustworthy if the celebrity possesses all of the crucial components, including being widely regarded as a trustworthy and credible spokesperson who has a clear tie to the organization being endorsed (Rutgers-Camden, 2013).

Celebrities have been proved to be effective fundraisers for many reasons. They have skills in mass communication, so they are able to reach a wide audience that the NPOs can utilize. They are also good at attracting attention, raising awareness of social issues and sometimes accessing the upper echelons of political power (Samman et al. 2009; Wheeler 2009). For these reasons, NPOs look for celebrities who are prepared to get involved in their causes while, in turn, celebrities seek to join an NPO or create their
own foundations (Garcia de los Salmones, et. al., 2013). However, CE can also cause issues and controversy if the celebrity is not a good fit for the organization.

An example of a celebrity endorsement that went wrong is Lance Armstrong and The Livestrong Foundation. The foundation was founded in 1997 in Austin, TX, as the Lance Armstrong Foundation, by Lance Armstrong, international cycling star. Because Armstrong himself is a cancer survivor, he created the organization in an effort to help those who are fighting cancer (Livestrong Foundation: Our Founder). His personal experience with cancer made him appear as a credible source and a good fit for the foundation’s CE.

The organization played an integral role in garnering support for the largest cancer prevention initiative in Texas history and the creation of the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas—which has raised more than $840 million in cancer prevention since its inception in 2009. Armstrong’s advocacy work also brought more than 500 of the world’s thought leaders from more than 65 countries together in Dublin for the Livestrong Global Cancer Summit, which produced a “unified global cancer movement for the first time in history” which resulted in impressive commitments (Livestrong Foundation: Who We Are, Livestrong Milestones).

In 2012, the USADA released a report confirming Armstrong’s use of performance-enhancing drugs during his cycling career. Amid this scandal, there was no mention of Armstrong on the Livestrong Facebook page. Instead the organization chose to post a graphic about the 15th anniversary, which received 4,420 likes, 261 shares and 256 comments. All viewable comments appeared to be positive toward the organization (Sanders, 2013).
On October 22, 2012, Armstrong was officially stripped of his seven Tour de France titles, and remained very much in the public eye, with rumors circulating that Armstrong was using the foundation as a way to convince the public he was a good person (Sanders, 2013). The organization addressed the scandal on its blog, stating that though they were extremely disappointed about his actions, they still felt gratitude towards him for all he did in the fight against cancer. Armstrong stepped down from the Livestrong board on November 4, cutting all official ties with the organization. The name of the nonprofit was also officially changed from the Lance Armstrong Foundation to the Livestrong Foundation in an effort to further separate the organization from Armstrong (Sanders, 2013). A graphic, shown below, was posted to the Facebook page which was shared more than 15,000 times (Sanders, 2013).

The repercussions that arose from this scandal were unfortunate for Livestrong. Many people felt turned off by the fact that Livestrong appeared to be deleting negative comments on the blog and SM outlets, and felt that the organization did not utilize social media to respond to or acknowledge the scandal while it was going on (Sanders, 2013).
There is no mention of Armstrong on the Livestrong Twitter timeline, nor was anything posted to Facebook concerning the scandal. The founder page on the website makes only a brief mention of Armstrong’s departure, stating that he resigned in 2012 and remains the biggest donor, praising his progress within the cancer community (Sanders). Publications such as *Outside* magazine and the *Huffington Post* published articles stating that the Livestrong and Armstrong are forever connected because of his endorsement, and because he was also the founder he created a link between himself and the organization that cannot easily be undone (Kielburger, 2013, Gifford, 2012). Nike, which had partnered with Livestrong for 9 years, announced that it would no longer support the foundation due to the scandal. The loss of this relationship amounted to $7.5 million annually. Overall donations and grants to Livestrong also declined significantly (Sanders, 2013). Overall, the doping scandal is a cautionary tale for NPOs who are considering using CE to further their cause.

Despite the negative results of the Armstrong-Livestrong CE, many other NPOs have managed to utilize celebrities successfully in order to increase donations and improve the reputation of the organization. One such success can be see in The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which has many famous Goodwill Ambassadors, most notably the well-known actress Angelina Jolie.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was established on December 14, 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly. The agency leads and coordinates international action to protect refugees and resolve problems worldwide. It strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State, with the option to return home voluntarily, integrate locally or to
resettle in a third country. It also has a mandate to help stateless people. In more than six decades, the agency has helped tens of millions of people restart their lives. Today, a staff of some 8,600 people in more than 125 countries are helping about 33.9 million people (“About Us”).

Jolie became Goodwill Ambassador for the UNHCR in 2001, and was most certainly appointed to this position because of her powerful cultural and political status and global fame (Barron, 2009). UNHCR sees credibility as very important when choosing a CE. The celebrities that support the organization all share a commitment to the cause, and the endorsement “comes about because he or she already has demonstrated that commitment” (Vasquez, 2010, pp. 1). Jolie is considered a globally famous celebrity figure, whose globalized sensibility became apparent through her adoption of three children: Maddox, from Cambodia, Zahara, from Ethiopia, and Pax, from Vietnam. Her passion for children made her a good fit for her volunteer work with UNHCR in 2001. As Jolie stated of her motivation for embracing this role: “If I can use this celebrity thing in a positive way, that might mean young people get involved, it has to be worth it” (Barron, 2009). Following her initial UNHCR work, she published a record of her activities, *Notes from My Travels*, which recounted her experiences with refugees and aid workers (Barron, 2009).

UNHCR was able to benefit from Jolie’s celebrity status in many ways, most notably by expanding their reach to a younger generation (Greene, 2001). Jolie appeared on television and posted her journal entries to the organization’s website, which resulted in 120,000 hits the day the journal of her visit to Cambodia was posted, compared to about 1,000 hits on a normal day (Greene, 2001). Her accounts of visits to Cambodia, Africa,
and Pakistan form a substantial part of the site's content, which can be seen as a sign of how important a role they played in building support for the charity's work. On the whole, donors who responded to Web appeals were considerably younger than those who answered mailed requests y UNHCR, thus adding to the expanding audience made possible by Jolien a normal day (Greene, 2001)

Overall, the merging of NPOs, CE and SM can be both rewarding and dangerous. As is evident through the examination of The Livestrong Foundation and UNHCR, the celebrity can make or break an image. While Armstrong’Foundation and UNHCR, the celebsconnect from the Livestrong Foundation, and caused damage to the NPOto the NPOdamage to the NPOle Armstrong is evident through the examina bring about new opportunities for UNHCR. In order to successfully utilize CE, NPOs need to pay special attention to the credibility and trustworthiness of the endorser (Rutgers-Camden, 2013). Today’s SM-focused society also offers both benefits and threats for NPOs, who must be careful with everything that is posted. Sharing too much can be detrimental, as can sharing too little, as many felt Livestrong did during the crisis (Sanders, 2013).

To further examine the relationship between NPO, CE and SM, the following set of research questions were developed:

*RQ1: Is there a relationship between the amount of engagement (likes, favorites, retweets, shares, comments) and the topic area of posts?*

*RQ2: Is there a relationship between the amount of engagement and the tone of the posts?*

*RQ3: Is there a relationship between the amount of engagement and the presence of added elements such as a hashtag, mention, photo, video or article?*
RESEARCH METHOD

The research method involved conducting a content analysis of the social media accounts of each of the two nonprofits, The Livestrong Foundation and UNHCR. The analysis looked closely at the Facebook and Twitter feeds for both organizations, using a coding sheet to code each social media post within the last two months. The codebook had variables that examined categories such as tone, topic area and nonprofit strategy, all of which were discussed in the literature review section of this paper. The coding sheet and explanation of each category can be seen in the appendix.

The research was conducted between February 16, 2015 and March 5, 2015. Beginning by taking screenshots of each Facebook post and tweet for both organizations for two months back, a sample of 350 social media posts were coded. Numbers were given for each category, depending on the individual post. For example, the topic area category was coded by giving a 1 to posts that are information-based, 2 to posts that are community-based, and 3 for action-based posts (see appendix for more details and example posts). The sample included 112 Twitter posts and 78 Facebook posts from the Livestrong accounts, and 100 Twitter posts and 60 Facebook posts from the UNHCR accounts.
RESEARCH FINDINGS

Of the 350 posts in the sample, 129 were categorized with a positive tone (37 percent), 64 negative (18 percent) and 157 neutral (45 percent). The topic area used most was Information with 223 posts (64 percent), followed by Community with 78 posts (22 percent) and Action with 49 posts (14 percent). These findings are in line with the secondary research by Lovejoy and Saxton (2012), which also stated that Information was the most popular category. When examining the added elements (article, hashtag, mention, photo and video), the use of photos was the most common, with 278 of the 350 posts (79 percent) including a photo. Articles were also very common, with 257 of the 350 posts (73 percent) including an article. Video was by far the least common, with only 28 total posts containing a video (8 percent). See the charts below for a visual representation of the data for each category that was coded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Hashtag</th>
<th>Twitter handle</th>
<th>Photo</th>
<th>Video</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>257</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One of the categories that proved difficult to code was the Nonprofit Strategy. It was nearly impossible to determine a strategy based on a single post for the majority of the sample. However, 144 posts (41 percent of the total sample) were coded for this category, with the other 206 posts (59 percent) coded as having no strategy. All strategies were coded at least once, with the exception of Master the Art of Adaptivity, because it is impossible to tell if the nonprofit is adapting when looking at each post in the sample individually. Of the other strategies, Serve and Advocate was seen most frequently, followed by Make Markets Work. See the graph below for the numerical data for the category, and the appendix for descriptions of each strategy.

![Pie chart showing distribution of strategies](image)

Celebrity endorsements were discussed in detail in the literature review, along with the topic of credibility, trustworthiness and expertise. However, like the strategies, this proved difficult to code. Because celebrities were not present in every post, or even in the majority of posts, it was difficult to decipher credibility in those posts that did not include a celebrity. Instead, the sample of posts containing a celebrity was evaluated sep-
arately based on the perceived credibility, trustworthiness and expertise of each. There were 10 total posts containing a celebrity.

In the example below, UNHCR shares a quote by Angelina Jolie about her trip to visit displaced refugees in Iraq. Because Jolie is such a well-known figure, this helps UNHCR in that the audience is more likely to perceive the message as being credible. Having a testimony by someone who is famous aids the message because the audience trusts Jolie and views her as a credible, trustworthy and knowledgeable. This would be an example of the highly credible post per the codebook.

Moving into examining the specific research questions, an “engagement” variable needed to be created in order to have a basis with which to gage what constituted high or low engagement. Therefore, a variable was created that represented all likes, retweets,
favorites, etc. across both social media platforms and organizations. The variable was then split into two groups at the median value for the variable, which is standard practice for creating dichotomous variables in statistics. The two groups included posts with 48 or fewer likes, comments, etc, and posts with 49 or more likes, comments, etc. The 48 or fewer group represented “low engagement”, while the 49 or higher group represented “high engagement.” Cross-tabulations were then completed using the high and low engagement variable against all of the other coded variables, to examine the relationship between engagement levels (high / low) and the various other coded categories.

*RQ1: Is there a relationship between the amount of engagement (likes, comments, shares, retweets) and the topic area of posts?*

The majority of the posts across both non-profits tended to be informational in nature and, of those informational posts, they seem to be split relatively evenly across high and low engagement levels. Community-related posts tended to drive higher engagement levels while action-related posts tended to have lower engagement levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Information Topic (# of posts)</th>
<th>Community Topic (# of posts)</th>
<th>Action Topic (# of posts)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Engagement Level (48 or fewer likes)</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Engagement (49 or more likes)</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RQ2: Is there a relationship between the amount of engagement and the tone of posts?

Although neutral posts dominated the field as far as quantity, they did not draw high levels of engagement. Of the posts that drove the highest levels of engagement, positive posts were most prevalent followed by negative and then in last neutral posts. The same pattern was true for low engagement posts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Negative (# of posts)</th>
<th>Neutral (# of posts)</th>
<th>Positive (# of posts)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Engagement Level</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Engagement Level</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ3: Is there a relationship between the amount of engagement and added elements such as an article, hashtag, celebrity, photo or video?

Unlike the other research questions, there were more than three variables involved in this one. “Added elements” encompassed any post that contains a hashtag, article, celebrity, photo, video or twitter handle. Beginning with articles, there was no significant difference in levels of engagement when article was present versus when there was no article. A hashtag also did not appear to gain significant engagement, and in fact, of the highest engagement posts, hashtags were NOT present. Posts with photos tended to create higher levels of engagement, along with videos although there were significantly less
posts including videos in comparison to photos. There were also very few posts including a celebrity, but those that did contain a celebrity gained high levels of engagement.

CONCLUSIONS

The main limitation to this study was time constraints. Because the research was conducted over the course of a few months, the type of research as well as the extent and detail was limited. Had there been more time available to devote to the primary research, a more varied approach could have been taken. For example, both quantitative and qualitative research could have been utilized, such as distributing a survey or conducting in-depth interviews in order to gain more information. There is great opportunity for future research, especially on the topic of celebrity endorsements, as this was not covered very extensively in this research. Conducting interviews or creating surveys on the topic of celebrity endorsements would allow for more understanding on this topic. The time restraints made it impossible to focus on all three topics, which explains why celebrity endorsements were not heavily analyzed throughout the research process. This future research could tie in the ideas from the Source Credibility Model in order to understand perceptions of the credibility of certain celebrity endorsers and the tie between the reputation of the endorser and the organization being represented.

This research aimed to look at how nonprofits use social media, as well recommendations for how social media can most effectively be used within nonprofits in the future. According to the research, nonprofits seem to stick with one strategy (the Serve and Advocate strategy), so diversifying content may help to drive engagement. Photos and videos in posts help increase engagement levels, so visual posts should continue to be
used in the future, with an increased emphasis in posting more videos, as these were not common but still garnered high engagement levels. Nonprofits should also try to post more positive content in their social media feeds as those posts show more promise of driving engagement, as opposed to the negative and neural-toned posts, which were much more common but that lead to lower engagement levels. The informational topic posts dominated the field for the two nonprofits examined, so this is a clear area where they can continue to provide value. However, the community topics gained the highest levels of engagement, so these posts should be used more often, with nonprofits paying more attention to the types of information they post in order to best catch the attention of the audience and gain high engagement levels.

According to Katalinić (2014), NPOs need to focus on their mission and people, be aware of client needs and expectations, and create new values and social innovations in order to be successful. SM brings many opportunities for NPOs to share these values and social innovations with their audiences in a more personal and efficient way. Using the recommendations laid out in the previous paragraph, NPOs can continue to be successful in the world of digital, and create content for social media sites that can generate high levels of engagement, while continuing to build a strong community of loyal supporters.
APPENDIX A: WEB PRESENCE AUDIT

Facebook

The Livestrong Foundation Facebook page has 1,722,487 likes and 3,306 total visits. The content shared is primarily articles related to cancer, information about the organization, promotion of events, and asking for support or donations. On average, the organization posts 2 times per day.

UNHCR has 630,993 likes and 4,636 visits on Facebook. The large majority of content is articles from the organization blog, sharing photos and stories from refugees, and general information about the organization. On average, the organization posts three times per day.
The Livestrong Foundation has 838K followers on Twitter, with 13.2K total tweets. The organization shares mostly independent content from the Facebook page, but does reuse articles or photos every once in a while. The content mostly fits into the informational category, but also includes community and action-based content as well.

UNHCR has 21.3K followers and 17.2K total tweets. The organization does reuse quite a lot of content (posting it to both Facebook and Twitter), and also tweets the same articles or photos more than once. The majority of the tweets are informational, sharing stories and photos from refugees around the world.
## APPENDIX B: CODEBOOK

**Coding Sheet**

1. **Tone**
   - A. Positive = 1
   - B. Negative = 2
   - C. Neutral = 3

2. **Topic area**
   - A. Information = 1
   - B. Community = 2
   - C. Action = 3

3. **Nonprofit strategy**
   - A. None = 0
   - B. Serve and Advocate = 1
   - C. Make Markets Work = 2
   - D. Inspire Evangelists = 3
   - E. Nurture Nonprofit Networks = 4
   - F. Master the Art of Adaptation = 5
   - G. Share Leadership = 6

4. **Presence of article**
   - A. No Article = 0
   - B. Article = 1

5. **Presence of hashtag**
   - A. No hashtag = 0
   - B. Hashtag = 1

6. **Presence of Twitter handle/ Facebook tag**
   - A. No twitter handle mentioned = 0
   - B. Twitter handle mentioned = 1

7. **Presence of photo**
   - A. No photo = 0
   - B. Photo = 2

8. **Presence of video**
   - A. No video = 0
   - B. Video = 1

9. **Presence of celebrity**
   - A. No celebrity = 0
B. Celebrity = 1

10. Number of likes (Facebook)
11. Number of comments (Facebook)
12. Number of shares (Facebook)
13. Number of retweets (Twitter)
14. Number of favorites (Twitter)
15. Which nonprofit it is
   A. Livestrong = 1
   B. UNHCR = 2
16. Social media platform
   A. Facebook = 1
   B. Twitter = 2

Explanation of Categories

Tone
The overall tone of each post will be coded, with the below definitions from Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary as guidelines.
   • Positive- Thinking about the good qualities of someone or something; thinking that a good result will happen; hopeful or optimistic
   • Negative- Thinking about the bad qualities of someone or something; thinking that a bad result will happen; not hopeful or optimistic; expressing dislike or disapproval.
   • Neutral- Not supporting either side of an argument, fight, war; not decided or pronounced as to characteristics; indifferent.

Twitter handle mentions
   • Mentioning other organizations or people in the post by using their handle on Twitter (i.e. @BBCnews) or tagging them on Facebook.

Topic Area
   • Information- Posts that are spreading information about the organization, its activities and anything else that may be of interest to followers. This function differs from the others in that it is a one-way information exchange with the sole purpose being to inform, with no explicit secondary agenda such as promotion of an event or development of a community.
   • Community- Posts that include dialogue and community-building which spark interactive conversations between the public and the organization. Examples include
giving recognition and thanks to donors, responses to public reply messages, and acknowledgment of current and local events.

- **Action**- Posts that are trying to get the audience to do something, such as donate, attend an event or join a movement. Examples include promotion of an event, donation appeal, calling for volunteers and employees and lobbying for a cause.

**Nonprofit Strategy**

- **Serve and Advocate**- Nonprofits combine direct service programs with advocacy, such as policy advocacy and grassroots programs.
- **Make Markets Work**- Work with businesses and companies to build partnerships, influence business practices and achieve social change.
- **Inspire Evangelists**- Build communities of loyal supporters, volunteers and donors, who feel connected to the core mission and values of the organization.
- **Nurture Nonprofit Networks**- Supporting other nonprofits and building relations and partnerships with them, instead of competing. These partnerships can be mutually beneficial, by sharing expertise, talent and power with one another.
- **Master the Art of Adaptation**- Modifying tactics as needed to increase success, and responding to changes effectively.
- **Share Leadership**- Leaders distribute the leadership throughout the organization, empowering others to lead, creating a strong “second-in-command”.
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