Leadership Perceptions of Social Media Use by Small- to Medium-Sized Nonprofits

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Abstract

This exploratory research focused on the social media use of small- to medium-sized nonprofit organizations. In-depth interviews with nonprofit leaders explored their perceptions of why nonprofit organizations and their leaders adopt and use social media, the strategies developed for doing so, and the barriers encountered in the adoption and utilization processes. Most of the leaders of small- to medium-sized organizations saw social media as a supplement to organizational activities, but had limited visions of how to use social media to engage with the constituencies and to advance organizational goals.

Keywords: social media; leadership perception; small- to medium-sized nonprofits; organizational capacity

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Social media has provided convening platforms for nonprofit organizations to communicate with multiple stakeholders, coordinate work within and across organizational boundaries, fundraise, and advocate for social causes. The online presence of nonprofit organizations helps individuals to decide which nonprofits to give to, volunteer with, and interact with. Scholars have studied organizational behaviors and strategies to gain attention and engage with stakeholders through social media. However, research has tended to be limited to the general description of organizational use of social media through surveys and single-platform (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) studies. Although scholars have identified the barriers of social media use for nonprofit organizations, such as available resources, social media competence, leadership, and constituency (Sun & Asencio, 2019), they have paid less attention to nonprofit leaders' perceptions of social media adoption. Nonprofit leaders focus on relationship building and maintenance among a myriad of stakeholders (i.e., volunteers, public, partners) to accomplish organizational mission needs such as basic collaboration, grant making and fundraising, and community partnership building (Chikoto et al., 2013). Being cognizant of the important role of social media for their causes will help nonprofit leaders to become comfortable with designing appropriate strategies and targeting relevant audiences.

In addition, the literature has paid more attention to large organizations, which "are more likely than smaller organizations to have a significant presence" (Nah & Saxton, 2013, p. 301) on social media. Scholars have noticed that social media adoption and use is influenced by organizational structures, as well as by organizational strategies, capacities, governance features, and external pressures (Curtis et al., 2010; Nah & Saxton, 2013). Nonprofit organizations vary in size, budget, resource base, mission, and membership, among other factors. This leads to significant diversity of organizational structures, capacity, management, and innovation. Small- to medium-sized nonprofit organizations make up most of the nonprofit organizations in the United States (McKeever, 2015). They are different in terms of social resources and organizational capacity compared to large organizations. The study of their social media adoption and use based on their leaders' perceptions will give a more comprehensive explanation of social media practice by nonprofit organizations.

This research focused on small- to medium-sized nonprofit organizations participating in Omaha Gives, which is a local fundraising event in the Midwestern United States. Omaha Gives categorizes nonprofits as large, medium, and small organizations based on their budget. It defines small nonprofits as having budgets of under $100,000 annually and medium organizations as having budgets of $100,001 to $500,000. Therefore, nonprofit organizations with budgets under $500,000 that participated in Omaha Gives were selected as the research sample. As a part of the emerging phenomenon of online giving, Omaha Gives has raised more than $40 million for more than 900 local organizations since its start in 2013. In 2018, 960 organizations participated in Omaha Gives and raised more than $7.4 million. The online giving day is a 24-hour event during which organizations use continuous and interactive social media strategies to persuade donors to give. Additionally, the organizations that participated expressed their desire for and their recognition of online engagement through social media with donors and the public. This research is intended for use by nonprofit leaders interested in becoming more knowledgeable about the state of social media and

better implementing social media. Focusing specifically on nonprofit leaders' perceptions (advantages and risks) of social media, this research examines the capacity, strategy, and future plans for social media adoption and use by small- to medium-sized nonprofit organizations.

Explaining Social Media Adoption

Social media is "a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technical foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Scholars have employed different theories and frameworks to analyze the reason and adoption pattern of social media by nonprofit organizations. Rogers' (2003) diffusion of innovations theory has been used for research, with social media being an innovative method of organizational management and social engagement (Barnes & Jacobsen, 2013; Khan et al., 2014; Pillay & Maharaj, 2014). Innovation has been defined as "a broad category, relative to the current knowledge of the analyzed unit. Any idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption could be considered an innovation available for study" (Rogers, 2003, p. 11). Although information technology and social media have been developed for more than two decades and extensively used by nonprofit organizations, social media is still a new and innovative method of communication, community engagement, capacity building, and mission fulfillment (Sun & Asencio, 2019; Young, 2017). The diffusion of innovation theory emphasizes the perception of the adopter and the characteristics of the innovation, as well as the stage of adoption (awareness-adoption/institutionalization. In other words, the personal attitudes, technology characteristics, and environmental factors impact the adoption and use of an innovation. For example, Sihi (2017) found that organizations with leaders who have more business experience are more likely to use social media as an information dissemination tool. Sun et al. (2015) found that organizations with leaders who are more involved in social media use are able to increase their capacity.

The literature has suggested that adoption and use of social media is influenced by diverse reasons. Nah and Saxton (2013) developed a model to analyze the adoption and use of social media, which includes strategy, capacity, governance, and environment. For example, human service organizations use social media for stakeholder engagement more than lobbying organizations (Nah & Saxton, 2013). Also, research has found that most organizations either have a narrow view of the potential value of social media or lack a long-term vision (Maxwell & Carboni, 2016). Although nonprofit organizations have realized the potential of social media for raising awareness and community engagement (Young, 2017), they may still shy away from adopting social media communication strategies for fear of losing control (Quinton & Fennemore 2013; Waters & Feneley, 2013) or for fear of social risks, time, psychological risks, and privacy concerns (Khan et al., 2014). McCaughey et al. (2014) examined the social media use of health care organizations and claimed a positive relationship between social media use and the clients' rating of experience and perceptions of organizational performance. Xu and Saxton (2019) focused on "what organizations can gain from their social media activities [and] how they can gain it" (p. 3) and emphasized the organizational capability of relationship building. Greenberg and MacAulay (2009) claimed that two-way communication is time-consuming and resource constrained and that "not every organization desires a relationship with their constituencies that is based on two-way, symmetrical

communication" (p. 74). Their arguments emphasize the predetermining purpose of social media use such as fundraising, advocacy, and membership management.

In addition, organizations with sufficient financial and human resources, such as large or international nonprofit organizations, are more likely to allocate resources for social media management and development (Curtis et al., 2010). On the contrary, organizations with fewer resources are more likely to rely on free social media accounts and lack professional personnel and management strategies (Kim et al., 2014). Although some nonprofits have recognized that social media can be a useful tool for community engagement, a lack of long-term vision and strategy of social media use may limit the reach of social media. Specifically, Sun and Asencio (2019) found that some nonprofit leaders lack understanding of the values of social media for their organizations and therefore do not support social media.

The cited literature has emphasized that the adoption of social media is influenced not only by the characteristics of social media but also by the perceived advantages and risks of social media by individuals and organizations, especially leaders of organizations. The current situation of social media adoption and use among small- to medium-sized nonprofit organizations can be better explained through nonprofit leaders' perceptions of advantages and risks of social media adoption and use.

Social Media Use and Organizational Capacity

Although social media is a free or low-cost communication tool for all types of organizations, researchers have found that organizational capacity, especially the available resources such as revenues and personnel, significantly impacts the social media use of nonprofit organizations. Fredericksen and London (2000) proposed four aspects of organizational capacity: "leadership and vision, management and planning, fiscal planning and practice, and operational support" (p. 233). These capacity aspects significantly impact the operation and management and the demonstration of accountability of nonprofit organizations (Eisinger, 2002). As a part of organizational operation and communication strategy, social media use has been significantly influenced by these capacity aspects.

Through large-scale surveys and statistical data (Carboni & Maxwell, 2015; Guo & Saxton, 2018; Nah & Saxton, 2013; Park & Lee, 2013; Young, 2017), scholars have described the current situation of social media adoption and use of nonprofit organizations. Although social media is an innovative approach for conversation and communication, scholars have found that nonprofit organizations are largely using social media as a one-way information dissemination channel (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Waters et al., 2009; Waters & Jamal, 2011), lacking interactivity and engagement on social media. Maxwell and Carboni (2016) found that although nonprofits generally report high social media use, use and stakeholder engagement varies widely among different types of organizations, indicating potentially poor or inattentive management of social media platforms. Campbell et al. (2014) found that nonprofits use social media primarily to market organizational activities, remain relevant to key constituencies, and raise community awareness.

Nonprofit organization staff are constantly thinking about how to sustain the organization and build trust in the community. Regarding the outcome of social media use, both Saxton and Wang (2013) and Bhati (2020) found that large organizations might invest more on social media activities and therefore receive more attention and

donations through social media activities. Focusing on online fundraising, Whitaker (2014) found that program expenses and the age of an organization are positively related to the success of social media fundraising. Lee's (2018) research on religious organizations revealed the gap between resource-rich organizations and resource-restricted organizations and between urban organizations and rural organizations. Young (2017) claimed that in reality, managing social media takes concentrated time and effort and smaller organizations with limited resources may not be able to utilize this medium in the desired capacity fully. Kim et al. (2014) suggested that organizations should allocate human and financial resources toward social media to manage the interactive features of social media through a comprehensive strategic plan. They suggested that future research should investigate not only the different ways organizations use social media but also whether organizations use it strategically to advance organizational goals.

This study attempts to expand and deepen the research base by including qualitative data that examine the reasons for social media adoption and use of nonprofit organizations. The categorizing and analytical models help to identify problems and trends. A better understanding of organizations' behavior related to social media adoption and use can be gained from the experience and ideas of the people who are using social media. Analyzing qualitatively and comprehensively the influence of nonprofit leadership and the missions, strategy, and capacity of nonprofit organizations could help organizations to use social media more effectively. Therefore, the research question is, how do leaders' perceptions of social media explain social media use by small- to medium-sized nonprofit organizations?

Method

The analysis focused on the reasons behind the decision of leaders to use social media for organizational purposes. The research sample was selected from organizations that participated in Omaha Gives. There were 960 organizations that participated in Omaha Gives 2018. Omaha Gives classified 451 organizations as small organizations and 229 as medium organizations. In addition, Omaha Gives categorized organizations by type including animal, arts and culture, civic engagement, community improvement, education, environment, health, human services, neighborhoods, religious, safety, social advocacy, transportation, workforce, and youth development. On the basis of the list of organizations from Omaha Gives, I started contacting different types of organizations through school colleagues who have connections with nonprofit organizations in Omaha. Finally, I reached 17 organizations and conducted 17 interviews with different organizations. The interviewed organizations are presented by a letter with a number, including five community improvement/neighborhoods organizations (C1 to C5), three human service organizations (H1 to H3), three art and culture organizations (A1 to A3), three education/youth development organizations (E1 to E3), one animal organization (M1), one religious organization (R1), and one environment/social advocacy organization (T1). The full-time employee numbers range from zero to six. The organizations ranged in age from 3 years to 100 years. The annual budgets ranged from $30,000 to $495,000.

I conducted in-depth interviews with the organizations' executive directors, presidents, board chairs, or board members who have managed or used to manage the

social media for their organizations. The interviews were face-to-face, lasting from 30 min to 1 hr; the average interview time was 40 min. Interviews focused on questions concerning the organizations' adoption and use of social media, which included the leaders' familiarity and attitude with prominent social media tools (Twitter, Facebook, etc.). Moreover, interview questions asked about the mission, goals, and strategy of the organizations and their future plans for social media use.

Findings

Through in-depth interviews, I learned that Facebook is the most used social media platform for small- to medium-sized nonprofit organizations. Although most of these organizations have had a consistent social media presence, their social media use has been mostly based on the social media knowledge of nonprofit leaders and lacks a consistent strategy. The perceived advantages, such as efficient information dissemination, and the perceived risks, such as losing information control, impact their social media use. The findings revealed the impact of limited capacity of personnel, time, and social media knowledge on social media use by small- to medium-sized organizations. Also, their experience of social media fundraising and social media engagement demonstrates the potential of social media to be used more effectively beyond the limitation of capacity.

General Use of Social Media Platforms

The nonprofit organizations in this research use social media differently. For example, organizations C1 and E3 do not consistently use social media. Although they have Facebook pages, the last update of C1 was in September 2014 and E3 was in February 2014. In contrast, organization H1 has multiple social media accounts and uses them consistently, including accounts for Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, as well as Vimeo, which is a video-sharing website, and three other social media accounts for internal communication. Besides Facebook and Twitter, some organizations also have accounts for YouTube, Vimeo, Instagram, and Slack.

Although there are diverse social media platforms that are used by nonprofit organizations, Facebook is the most commonly used social media platform. Besides organizations C1 and E3, all the other organizations use Facebook as the main social media platform. During the interviews, they said Facebook is the most consistently used social media for their organization. The representative of H2 said, "I don't always post everything on different platforms. Facebook is the most commonly used . . . It just depends on what I want to reach and what I'm feeling. But nine times out of ten I will use Facebook." Other organizations such as A2 and C2 cited concerns of using Twitter because of minimal audience impact and lacking personal expertise on how to use the platform.

Perceptions of Social Media by Nonprofit Leaders

Although these organizations are using social media very differently, their leaders all recognize the importance or value of social media for their organizations. They used terms such as a "phenomenal thing" (C1) and a "critical component" (H2) to describe social media.

Perceived Advantages of Social Media Use

The perceived advantages of social media use mainly focus on the efficiency and effectiveness to reach more people. For the interviewees, social media is helpful and valuable at reaching more people at little or no cost. The executive director of E2 described social media as "efficient," "convenient," and "much easier to get people." Organizations including C1, H1, R1, and H3 echoed similar advantages of social media use, including the ability to capture large audiences, quickly promote messages, encourage fundraising, and mobilize supporters. The board chair of C1 said, "It's a very quick way to mobilize people and get them all on the same page very quickly."

The other mentioned advantage was social media as "a communication tool" (R1) "to build relationships and to connect with people." The "social" feature of social media allows organizations to keep "ongoing engagement" (C3) with different people. As the former chair and board member of T1 noted, "When we first started, Facebook was our primary mechanism for engaging with people and that's where we built up a lot of following and connections with people."

Perceived Risks of Social Media Use

Besides perceived advantages, interviewees had multiple concerns about the possible problems and challenges related to social media use. The most frequently mentioned concerns included (a) balancing between too much and too little, (b) the increasing competition of attention and donations, (c) the control of information flow and information safety, and (d) the age divide and use preference of audiences.

More than four decades ago, Simon (1971) argued that in an "information-rich world," the scarcity of attention and the restrained capacity of information processing would be a big challenge for individuals and organizations (p. 37). With the proliferation of information technology and social media, both scholars and practitioners have realized the increasing competition for attention and donations.

From their personal experience, the interviewees were concerned about the appropriate use of social media, trying to avoid bothering and interrupting people's daily life due to information overload. The board chair of C1 reported that their organization is cognizant of how intentional and impactful their social media posts are, always considering the attention span of their intended audience. Both the representatives of H2 and C2 portrayed the same concern, which influences their social media use. The development director of H2 said,

> The biggest challenge is what balance we have between too little and too much . . . If somebody posts all day long, I don't pay attention . . . I want just enough [of] what I am interested in . . . but not so much that [it's] just noise.

Also, the board chair of C2 said, "Our focus is to effectively, efficiently, and appropriately communicate with people. You know there is also too much information." The executive director of E2 shared this sentiment and reported that her organization is aware of how inundated with information users can be on social media. The social media goal that E2 aims to achieve is to "be at a level where people will open it and read everything you write."

Second, as the social media landscape evolves, the interviewees found that there is increasing competition of attention and donations. Especially for small organizations with limited resources, increasing competition has challenged their resource allocation

and their use of social media. The executive director of E2 said, "I think it is just so intense that you're really fighting for limited resources. So if you're a small nonprofit you need to be really careful that you don't go overboard with your resources." The board member of A2 supported this sentiment, reporting her concerns that her organization has not been successful in creating "enough community buy-in" to encourage engagement and attendance at their events.

The representatives of T1, R1, C4, and C5 expressed that compared to earlier days, it is increasingly harder to reach people and get people's attention if they do not pay money to boost their posts. The president of C5 said,

> It's becoming harder and harder to reach your audience online. The algorithms that [Facebook uses] and what they choose to push through to all of your followers. They're asking you to boost and target your audience. We need to spend money on it and that's just something we don't put on our budget.

Third, the findings resonate with research regarding fear of losing control and privacy concerns, which impact social media adoption by nonprofit organizations (Khan et al., 2014; Quinton & Fennemore 2013; Waters & Feneley, 2013). Nonprofit organizations are trying to control their online identity and online presence. For example, the director assistant of A1 said, "There is a lot of bad things that are on social media. There's a lot of people that want to get away from it. People are getting [more leery] of it or more whatever because of all this publicity." The communication director of M1 explained that they stopped using Pinterest because of the misrepresentation of the organization on this platform. She said,

> When we open the Pinterest account, I have people taking photos from our Web page and posting them on Pinterest and saying look at this poor dog. I thought that we were sort of being misrepresented. And I did not like the lack of control on Pinterest . . . But Pinterest I finally just sort of took down because we just couldn't control the direction it was going.

Fourth, due to the age difference and communication preferences of their stakeholders, the interviewees expressed their concern about balancing communication with their members and the public. The development director of H2 noted,

> I am reaching a lot of people. I also have to check what I say because I have to keep in mind that the nuances that the members will get. You wouldn't understand as a nonmember. I have to make sure that anything I put is broad enough.

The representative of A1 expressed concern for social media literacy of older generations, specifically for the organization's clientele and stakeholder access to Facebook. The representative cited various reasons why people are against social media and even suggested some of the organization's older members "don't have e-mail address."

Compatibility of Social Media and the Organization's Mission and Capacity

Nonprofit strategic management scholars have acknowledged the salience of organizations' mission to drive organizational strategy and performance (Anheier, 2005; Phills, 2005). This research includes organizations with different types of service (community improvement, education, human service, animal, art and culture, religion) and different organizational structures (membership-based, client-based, and network).

Regardless of the differences, the interviewees recognized the strategic value of the organizational mission and acknowledged that the use of social media is compatible with their the missions of their organizations. The former chair and board member of T1 said,

> We always try to keep in mind what our mission is. And does what we're posting relate to that? One, if not, don't post it. Or if so, then how [can] we convey a message that aligns with our mission and values.

As leaders in small- to medium-sized nonprofit organizations, the research participants mostly rely on the local community for individual donations, local grants, community attendance, and volunteer support. Their social media use encompasses these purposes and helps them to fulfill the missions of their organizations. The executive director of H1 noted,

> Our mission involves all our programs, all our events, all our attempts to educate the community about different things. That's [what] our mission [is] about, that's also [what] our posts [are] about. So, we promote our programs on social media, our events, our educated community on social media, different things. They are pretty much the same thing for us.

The board chair of C2 admitted the compatibility of the mission of C2 with their social media use. He said, "The three key words of our mission are 'connect,' 'collaborate,' and 'communicate.' That is social media, social media, and social media, if our clients are using it." However, as the findings revealed, he is also concerned by the social media use preferences of their stakeholders and suspects the members of the organization do not use social media that much.

Besides the general pattern regarding social media use, differences among organizations of different types and structures were also found. For example, education/youth development organizations have been more active at online community building and interaction rather than information sharing compared to other types of organizations, which can be explained by education organizations having younger clients. For example, the representative of E1 noted,

> [Social media] became a huge tool for us to communicate with, to identify and capture alumni, but also communicate with our students and their parents. That was the second biggest thing that's helped us out. Because every year now when we have our students come for a pre-camp activity. And the parents are worried about they're not going to be able to call their students and I'm like, hey, don't worry about it. Get on your phone right now, like us on Facebook, and you'll see a picture a day of what they're doing at camp. That just answers that request. And they are happy with it. We cannot live without social media.

Although the research participants acknowledged that social media use is mostly compatible with and helpful for their organizational missions, they also reported that the biggest challenges and obstacles to developing social media use were the limitations of time, skills, and professional staff. Many small nonprofit organizations comprise all volunteers, with no paid full-time staff. Usually their social media is managed by interns or volunteers with full-time jobs elsewhere. No matter if the organization has all volunteers or has six full-time employees, all of the participants mentioned that they do

not have enough time and personnel. There are not enough personnel with both a clear understanding of the mission of the organizations and expertise in communication on social media. The president of R1 said, "So we recognized we needed somebody who is more professional and knows exactly what we are doing, and knows how to leverage the platform for what it can do for what we are trying to do." The representatives of H3, C4, and E2 mentioned that being responsive and keeping ongoing engagement on social media requires a lot of time.

The board chair of C1, which is an organization comprising all volunteers, cited the concern for time as a barrier to social media use. This board chair of C1 admitted that all of the employees of her nonprofit work other full-time jobs and it is difficult to find the time to take up the challenge of social media use for organizational purposes. Even full-time director positions at nonprofits have to be concerned with raising money as opposed to monitoring social media.

The representative of A3 with one full-time staff and one part-time staff said, "I can't devote a lot of time because I've got a lot of other plates that are spinning and I have to keep spinning." Also, the board chair of C2 acknowledged that all of the employees at this nonprofit have full-time jobs elsewhere and that although there are incentives to grow through social media use, the time it takes to manage this responsibly is not feasible. The associate director of C3, which has six full-time staff, also mentioned the lack of professional personnel: "So none of our current staff would have the capacity or the expertise to take that [social media management] on. We don't have any of that knowledge to use them, especially social media is changing so quickly." The communication director of M1 also noted that even if her organization could afford to pay somebody to manage social media, it would not be proper spending of the organization's funds; this money would be better spent on the product and services the organization offers to the community.

For organizations such as M1 and T1, due to the limited time that can be dedicated on social media management, social media management is a coordination process that takes teamwork. The communication director of M1 mentioned the difficulty and challenge of social media coordination:

> There is a volunteer who is a little difficult. She is the [Facebook] administrator. And this probably is an issue for other nonprofit organizations. You want to have some social media across apps, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and your website. You want all of that to match. But we have known that our Facebook administrator would not be cooperative. I think communication across the board with all the different people involved in the different outreach social media is a challenge.

Social Media Purpose, Strategy, and Future Plans

Social Media Purpose

The literature has revealed that most nonprofit organizations use social media as platforms or tools for raising awareness and information dissemination (Campbell et al., 2014; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Waters et al., 2009; Waters & Jamal, 2011). This research found that the main purposes for small- to medium-sized nonprofit organizations to use social media include raising awareness, publishing events and programs, interaction and communication, and fundraising.

Several interviewees reported using social media to let "more people know about us" (M1), to "let people know we exist and what we are doing" (A2), and to "let people be aware of [the] causes related to what we are doing" (R1). According to the board chair of C2,

> We use it mostly for now to remind people of our networking luncheons . . . Other than that our own conversation at the meeting is about how to get the word out more about what we are doing, more efficient and effective about the messages we are sending out.

The executive director of H1 also noted,

> For a very small team like us, we use social media as our number one tool to get the word out about our festival; we've got thousands of people coming to our festival through our social media push. A lot of our clients engage with us on social media. So I think it's working relatively well. For what we need right now, we need to promote what we are doing, our programs, our events. And in doing that, we also try to build up our following and get new people to like us, to let people know us more. Those two things are our focus right now.

Social Media Strategy

The research participants were also asked whether their organizations have a documented policy or strategy for social media use. Only H3 has documented policies regarding social media use and management. Most of the organizations use social media based on the leaders' or managers' knowledge and personal experiences, focusing more on information sharing with their partners and members. The representative of A3 said, "We just do whatever that something's coming up. We don't think ahead to do a certain amount." The associate director of C3 admitted that their organization does not have a documented social strategy but recognizes social media as a tool for communication. Once again, the reason for this lack of prioritization comes back to money. The associate director of C3 said that development strategy does not involve social media use. Accordingly, the representative of T1 mentioned that it is not necessary for them to have a specific policy for social media management.

Future Plans of Social Media Use

Regarding the future plans of social media use, the interviewees expressed their expectation of using social media more professionally, to produce targeted information and identify targeted audiences and to build online community. The president of C5 acknowledged, "[Social media] is effective but is not being used to its full potential." Social media can be adopted as a tool to find the people with the same interest and value of the organizations through targeted information to different audiences.

Although C1 and E3 do not use social media, they plan to find some people who know their organizations and have social media expertise to develop a comprehensive social media plan. Also, most of the organizations are looking for possible solutions to address the challenges of limited skills and time. R1 hired a professional communication manager. The president of R1 said,

> [The new manager] is getting ready and she's got a strategy. She's mapping out all the polls. She's starting that, instead of just kind of randomly putting quotes on there. She is building a calendar and a schedule to really lead a conversation and not just put stuff out there. We're going to have a far more sophisticated social media presence.

The president of E3 said, "I have had some interns' name on my list. Most of them are college student of communication or marketing majors. A few month later you will see a big difference on our social media."

The interviewees realized that compared to general information dissemination, more targeted information to specific audiences might be more effective for communication and engagement. Many of the organizations expressed that more targeted social media outreach can result in more effective fundraising efforts. The board member of A2 cited concerns about identifying a target audience on social media. The representative of A3 also said, "When we target our information on Facebook to a specific group, it is totally much more effective."

Beyond raising awareness and information dissemination, the research participants expressed their expectation to build online community. For example, representatives A3, R1, and E1 are thinking about how to connect people with the same cultural background, faith, or interest through social media platforms. The president of C4 noted that online community building and networking might be a solution to combat increasing online competition. He proposed a platform that unifies the individual values and specific organizational missions of nonprofits in the Omaha area. Specifically, more targeted audience outreach via social media could reduce nonprofit competition in volunteer recruitment and fundraising efforts.

Discussion

Theories of diffusion of innovations and affordance explore and explain the impact of perceptions and the characteristics of innovation on social media adoption and use. All the leaders of these organizations realize the advantage of social media, which refers to an easy and simple way to reach more people. Although almost all of them have no official policies or strategies that can support and guide them on use social media use, the perceived advantage of social media and the compatibility of social media with their organizations' mission and development make them use or think of using social media based on their own judgment and knowledge.

Although scholars talked a lot about the dialogical communications function of social media, they mostly use social media for information sharing and awareness rather than conversation and dialogue. Campbell et al. (2014) found that nonprofits use social media primarily to market organizational activities, remain relevant to key constituencies, and raise community awareness. Most organizations either had a narrow view of the potential value of social media or lacked a long-term vision for social media use (Campbell et al., 2014). This research has similar findings. These small- to medium-sized organizations focus on how social media helps them to share information with partners and members, to raise awareness, and to get the word out. Although some of them have realized that they need to be interactive on social media, a lack of time and expertise limits their use of social media as a communication and interaction tool. The question is whether they are wasting their limited time and resources on a medium with a little return on investment.

It is possible that different motivating factors may affect the use of social media by the organizations and the success of their social media outcomes. The perceived advantages of reaching more people quickly and the successful examples of social media fundraising have urged them to think about adopting and using social media. It

is true that the individuals, especially the leaders' perception of innovation, drive the adoption and use. They have a clear intention or specific goal for using social media. However, most of their perceptions come from their personal experiences and personal feelings. For them, social media is simply being added to the list of activities that they already participate in, including membership communication and fundraising.

Scholars have found that perceived risks (Quinton & Fennemore, 2013; Waters & Feneley, 2013) negatively influence the adoption and use of social media by nonprofit organizations. From the interviews, obstacles and difficulties emerged regarding the experiences of the participants using social media in their organizations. Obstacles such as lack of time and professional knowledge and skills, the concerns of information overload, and the absence of formal policies for social media use seemed to dampen leaders' enthusiasm for using these tools.

The interviewees expressed that social media use and management requires expertise and knowledge, time, a relatively stable workforce, and collaboration among organizational staff. They are not proactively generating and initiating the dialogues and conversations on social media. Mostly, they are aware of being responsive to the comments and questions on social media platforms. In contrast, few of them have had tried to encourage people to have conversations with the organization online. Most of the small- to medium-sized nonprofit organizations are constrained in their capacities to fully utilize diverse social media platforms. Interviewees revealed their future plans for social media use and expressed their expectations of continued online community building.

Furthermore, their concerns related to fundraising through social media and the Internet were surprising. Many scholars have discussed the effectiveness and value of online fundraising (Laird, 2010; Ogden & Starita, 2009; Saxton & Wang, 2013). It is true that events such as Omaha Gives can help small- to medium-sized nonprofit organizations to expand their reputation and reach. However, because of the limitation of resources, what they can do is also limited. In contrast, as Bhati (2020) found that large organizations with more resources can invest many more resources to an online giving event and thus gain more attention and donations. The question of whether social media use narrows the gap between large nonprofit organizations and small- to medium-sized nonprofit organizations remains unanswered.

Although the research conducted was based on the organizations that participated in a specific online fundraising event, the findings and discussions might still be able to be generalized to broader nonprofit organizations, especially the relationship between organizational capacity and social media use. The interviewees said that for small- to medium-sized nonprofit organizations, they need to use social media creatively. The interviewees expressed that they clearly know that their social media use can be improved. Compared to studies that emphasized the usage purpose as information dissemination and two-way interaction and communication, this study shows that the interviewees' expectations of online community building demonstrate the potential of social media as a channel of two-way conversation and interaction. However, they also think they are doing the best with what they can do. Therefore, with trainings and assistance to design a clear goal of social media use, the leaders of small- to medium-sized nonprofit organizations will be able to be more involved in the design and development of social media strategy, which make the social media more beneficial for

organizations with limited resources and capacity. For example, besides Facebook and Twitter, platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat were mentioned noted by partici-pantss. By measuring and tracking social media activities, and by understanding the constituencies of organizations and the landscape of social media platforms, small- to medium-sized nonprofits can create a more specific goal and better implement social media.

This research attempts to explain the current social media use from the perspective of nonprofit leadership. Several limitations need to be noted. First, the research only includes interviews with 17 leaders from small- to medium-sized nonprofits. Although the interviews present rich description regarding nonprofit leadership perception of social media, these perceptions cannot represent all small- to medium-sized nonprofit organizations. In the future, the I aim to collect more data to compare the organiza-tions in different service areas regarding their purpose and goal of social media use and to explore how social media use can be an empowering tool for small- to medium-sized nonprofit organizations. Second, the research sample comes from a local online fundraising event. The network effect of the umbrella fundraising event has not been explored. Further research might be able to compare organizations that do and do not participate in the event. Also, demographic information such as age of stakehold-ers might be another impacting factor for social media use, which will be addressed in further research. Third, this research mostly focuses on the subjective statements and expressions of individuals who use social media for their organizations. Further research could collect demographic information regarding the nonprofit leaders, to understand the demographic characteristics' impact on the organizations' social media content.

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Appendix
Interview Protocol

Introduction

Thank you very much for taking the time to talk with me today. This research is exploring the social media adoption and use by small- to medium-sized nonprofits that participated in Omaha Gives 2018. The research is expected to analyze the relationship between nonprofit leadership, organizational capacity and strategy with social media adoption, and strategy and the future plans of social media use for small human service nonprofits. Your insights into this issue will help us to better understand the social media adoption and use in practice. The interview will be 40 minutes to 1 hour.

Would it be okay if I record the interview? Raw data from the interview will not be shared with anyone and your comments will remain anonymous. The data from the interview might be shared with other research colleagues, but all personally identifiable information will be removed.

You are free to deny responding to any questions or prompts presented by the researcher. You are also free to end the interview at any time.

Participation in Omaha Gives

1. Why did your organization participate in Omaha Gives?
2. What benefits, if any, has your organization gained from participating in Omaha Gives?
3. What problems, if any, has your organization had participating in Omaha Gives?

Experience Using Social Media

1. What prompted your organization to start using social media?
2. From your standpoint, what have been the benefits of using social media?
3. Have you experienced any barriers or challenges to using social media? If so, what are these?
4. Has your organization experienced any risks associated with using social media? If so, what are these? What has been your experience managing these risks?
5. As an executive director/board chair, what do you think about the effective leadership?
6. How can social media be a part of your leadership?

Organization's Characteristics and Social Media Use

1. What do you see as the relationship between social media use and your organization's mission?
2. How effective do you think your organization has been in using social media?
3. What's the influence of your organization's capacity on your social media use, if any? Do you think you need additional capacity to use social media well? In what ways?

Purpose, Strategy, and Future Plans

1. How would you describe your organization's social media strategy?

2. What's the purpose of your organization's social media strategy? What do you hope to achieve through your use of social media?

3. What kind of measurement and metrics does your organization have for social media use?

4. How do you see social media fitting into your organization's strategic plan?

5. What are your future plans for social media use in your organization?