

CAPTURING THE DIGITAL DOLLAR: HOW RELIGIOUS NONPROFITS ARE
ADOPTING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ADOPTION, ENGAGEMENT, AND COMMUNITY

BY

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Dedication

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Abstract

The objective of this thesis was to quantify the impact of religious, media-related nonprofit adoption rate, online presence, and online giving technology. Specifically, this thesis focuses on the nonprofits' adoption, use, and interactivity on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. This thesis study was rooted in Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory, and its constructs were used to best understand the adoption and impact of use within the religious nonprofit sector (Rogers, 2003). First, the researcher defined and evaluated the nonprofit's active online presence, sophistication of technology integration, and impact of these findings. Second, the researcher quantitatively examined audience interactivity. Targeting a niche nonprofit group that has an understanding of online presence and content creation (religious, media-related nonprofits) significantly revealed that the extent of digital innovation and social media used was not dependent on the amount of revenue. This study provides the level of adoption of social media and online donation tools and audience interactivity that can assist nonprofits to efficiently invest their resources for a better return on investment on a digital, online scale.

Keywords: Nonprofit, social media, millennial, diffusion of innovations theory

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Religious nonprofits located in the United States of America are facing challenges to attract new donors as their core donor demographic continues to shrink (Gorczyca & Hartman, 2017). These nonprofits are challenged to engage a new generation of future donors while they face never-ending competition for donors and potential donors over limited resources. As a result, nonprofits look to the new face of philanthropy: Millennials (Gorczyca & Hartman, 2017).

The characteristics differentiating generational groups have established a need for promotional messages and other communication strategies to be targeted toward millennial values and digital communication tools. As a result, nonprofit organizations have shifted their communication strategies to connect with millennial giving. The results of using digital communication tools can best connect with the Millennials' wants and needs and may drive millennial behavior so that new resources for sustainable giving are obtained (Mahmoud, 2020).

Understanding the impact of social media platforms in engaging and influencing the opinions of the users, contributes to an area of research in strategic communication, e-philanthropy, and marketing. This research primarily focused on the following two objectives, which were: 1) Understanding the adoption rate and level of online presence of religious, media-related nonprofits, and 2) understanding audience engagement with the posted content. This quantitative study looked at nonprofit data from the following social media sites: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. Previous research regarding these social media sites, nonprofit use, and e-philanthropy has been scattered across different disciplines (i.e., philanthropy, business, and communication) and the majority of the research applied data that is over five years old.

Additionally, no academic research was found on religious nonprofit social media and fundraising use. This thesis was unique in two aspects. First, the researcher focused on a specific genre of nonprofit, religious-related with a media focus. Second, the researcher specifically evaluated the nonprofit's active online presence, the use of social media platforms, the sophistication of technology integration, and audience interactivity. Targeting a niche nonprofit group that has an understanding of online presence and content creation (religious, media-related nonprofits) revealed unique insights that serve to help nonprofits efficiently invest their resources for a better return on investment on a digital, online scale.

This thesis proposed a quantitative study to understand how religious nonprofits are addressing the challenge of reaching a new donor base by using social media and other digital tools to connect with their online audiences. Therefore, the goal of this study was to define social media adoption within religious nonprofits' communication strategies and e-philanthropy techniques. By exploring these dynamics, the extent to which nonprofits are using digital technologies, and social media at large, the audience's engagement was analyzed. These findings were then used to do further research in regard to reaching a younger demographic. Additionally, nonprofit organizations may understand how to attract Millennials donors for sustainable giving.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In this literature review, the term “nonprofits” was defined in relation to this study and the challenge of their limited donor pool was addressed. The implications were radical, calling for nonprofits to use digital communication tools such as social media to reach the next generation of donors, Millennials. Millennials’ attitudes, values, and behaviors define communication message structure and communication style, and so a brief history of the digital landscape and tools will be defined. Multimedia content types and social media platforms that were used within the research process were also defined and the researcher will highlight previous research findings that assist in defining the gap for future research.

Understanding the impact of social media platforms in the nonprofit field has been an active area of research in the intersection of the fields of Nonprofit, Strategic Communication, Philanthropy, and Business. To provoke thought and help sculpt the future research process, Rogers’ Diffusion of Innovations Theory and organizational adoption of innovations was considered when analyzing the research data. This theory was discussed before the researcher highlighted her key findings and proposed the research questions and hypotheses that sculpted the methodology.

Defining Nonprofits

A nonprofit organization, also known as a non-business entity, not-for-profit organization, or nonprofit institution, is committed to furthering a particular social cause or advocating for a shared point of view (Foundation, 2020). Nonprofit organizations are mostly mission-driven centric and the success of nonprofit organizations is usually measured by their

impact in the community (Peric et al., 2020). Nonprofits differ from for-profit organizations in terms of finances namely, tax-exempt status.

Nonprofit companies, located in the United States of America, are businesses and corporations that have been given tax-exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) because their organization furthers religious, scientific, charitable, educational, literary, public safety or cruelty-prevention missions or areas of work (Barrett, 2019). These organizations must request a 501(c) prior to operating with a tax exemption. The nonprofit subcategories are under Section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code, and each has its own requirements and regulations, limitations, and tax implications, as well as the ability to apply for tax exemption (Council, 2020).

There are two types of nonprofits under the IRS's 501(c) code: nonprofit organization (NPO) and not-for-profit organization (NFPO). NPOs serve the public via goods and services and are categorized by the IRS as 501(c)(3). 501(c)(3) are organizations that are "corporations, funds or foundations that operate for religious, charitable, scientific, literary or educational purposes" (IRS, 2020, para. 3). This tax code considers "churches and religious organizations," which the IRS defines to include mosques, synagogues, temples, and other houses of worship, to be "public charities" (Nonprofits, 2020, para. 2).

Given the tax-exempt status of these nonprofits, nonprofits differ from for-profit organizations from the standpoint of finances and ownership. The nonprofit ownership structure prohibited a person from owning shares of the corporation or interests in its property. Governance responsibility is vested equally in the board of directors or trustees. These individuals are accountable to state and federal authorities to ensure the organization operates in a legally compliant manner. These individuals operate in a position of trust and accountability

for the public at large, who, via government, allow nonprofits to operate exempt from the taxes that for-profit businesses must pay.

A for-profit organization is a corporation that is a legal person in the eyes of the law with ownership vested in the shareholders. When a corporation is formed, an initial number of shares of stock must be declared. The purchasing of the stocks allows the for-profit organization to raise capital (Tiberius et al., 2020). The public's purchase stocks can aid the company financially and it also represents partial ownership of the corporation. For-profit businesses typically seek to generate income for its founders and employees through the sales of products or services.

According to the IRS, no part of the net earnings of a section 501(c)(3) organization may inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual (2021). This requires the income to be recycled back into the nonprofit corporation's public benefit mission and activities. As a result, nonprofits rely heavily on the donations from the public and are required to reinvest extra income into their organization.

A nonprofit organization's purpose is to serve the public or the mutual benefit of members rather than to receive a profit. As a result, nonprofits do not depend on commercial earnings, but philanthropic donations and grants from governments and companies. This has cultivated a strong desire within most nonprofits to facilitate philanthropic donations by engaging and creating relationships with the public. This desire has propelled many nonprofit organizations to develop efficient and effective internet-based communication strategies. Most researchers seem to agree that nonprofit organizations (NPOs) gradually become more hybrid by adopting communication strategies and practices from the business and communication world (Carré et al., 2020; Suykens et al., 2019).

NPOs are reliant on contributions or donations to maintain their nonprofit services and these can be obtained through traditional (physical) or online methods. A true contribution has been made with charitable intent, which occurred when the donor receives nothing back beyond the pleasure of supporting a meritorious cause (Barrett, 2019). They have a never-ending battle of competing for donors and potential donors over limited resources (Gorczyca & Hartman, 2017). Philanthropy literature and previous studies have defined that these types of large contributions have come from a narrowing pool of donors-- the Baby Boomer Generation (Williams, 2007).

Baby Boomers

The United States Census Bureau defined Baby Boomers as adults born from 1946 through 1964 in the United States (Colby & Ortman, 2014). Until 2020, Baby Boomers have always outranked other generations in regard to population size (Pew, 2015, 2019). The values that shaped this generation include a strong sense of self, independence, and change (Pew, 2008). As a result, choice and control are very important to Baby Boomers (Williams, 2007). Studies have shown that Boomers have a strong desire to promote change with their financials, and as a result, prefer supporting causes with quantifiable results (Downs, 2019).

Research has statistically supported the idea that Boomer women donate more than men to charities (Fidelity, 2017). According to the Fidelity (2017) study, Boomer women are 51% more strategic and satisfied and are more prone to give in the moment compared to 40% of men. While 64% of women were motivated by their heart versus head when it comes to giving decisions, the study reported that 73% of the women are confident about which charities to support.

Baby Boomers collectively control 80% of all financial wealth in the United States and are responsible for about half of all philanthropic giving from individuals (Johns, 2018). In the coming decades, Millennials stand to inherit \$30 trillion from this generation and may continue the trend of charitable giving. This provides a unique opportunity for nonprofit organizations to examine their donor base and enact a multi-generational donor strategy. This would involve targeting a younger generation, specifically Millennials, to maintain long-term sustainability and potentially stimulate growth and scale. This can be done by using technology, digital media, and communication strategies that resonate with Millennials' lifestyles and values.

Millennials

Pew Research defined a Millennial as anyone born between 1981 and 1996 (Dimock, 2019). With an estimated population of 72.1 million, Millennials have surpassed Baby Boomers as the nation's largest living adult generation, according to the United States Census Bureau (2020). Born beginning in 1981, Millennials had the opportunity to witness the invention and adoption of wireless technology such as the internet and smartphones (DeVaney, 2015; Gorczyca & Hartman, 2017). Digital communication became second nature or at least heavily incorporated in Millennial digital natives' lives (DeVaney, 2015; Thomas, 2011; Zimmerman, 2012).

Millennials tend to spend big, value living in the moment, and believe they are and will continue to better the future (Pontefract, 2018). Additionally, they possess the following traits: entrepreneurial, independent, driven, pursue flexibility, collaborative but decisive, curious, and seek self-directedness (Dwivedi & Lewis, 2020; Nawaz, 2020; Purania et al., 2019). Given these characteristics, marketing messages directed at Millennials must connect with these attitudes, values, and behaviors to be effective when building relationships and online community from which financial contributions are requested.

Defining the Future Nonprofit Donors

When defining the target audience, audience segmentation can be used to create defined generational groups based on lifestyle patterns, motivations, and needs (Pew, 2015). Audience segmentation has typically been based on delineated age ranges set by year of birth (Tynan & Drayton, 2010). An individual's age is one of the most common predictors of differences in attitudes and behaviors (Pew, 2015). Depending on the source, there may be a slight difference in establishing birth years, but there is general consensus on the characteristics of the individuals falling within those parameters (Pew, 2019). For example, these include generational categories such as Millennials, Generation Z, and the Silent Generation (Cilluffo & Cohn, 2019)

Communication Style

Researched by Paulin and colleagues (2014), Millennials recognize themselves to be competent in the use of communication technologies and are the most active generation in texting, smartphone use, and use of social media. Research found that almost all Millennials, nearly 100%, use the internet while 19% of them are smartphone-only internet users (Vogels, 2019). In addition, Millennials view YouTube more than any other video online source (Febriyantoro & Wright, 2020). It is not simply that Millennials use a variety of technologies to maintain constant connections, but they are also connected on social media (Dwivedi & Lewis, 2020).

Social media use is prevalent in all generations, but Millennials were the first to adopt social media and are still actively seeking connections through a variety of social media platforms (Paulin et al., 2014; Pew, 2019). Millennials are active on social media for an average of two hours and 38 minutes daily (Viens, 2019). Pew Research (2019) found that Millennials continued to use these sites at high levels, but usage by older adults has increased in recent years.

Philanthropy research noted that Millennials are technology natives and are fundamental for organizations to engage as donors through digital media to ensure an increased connection (Paulin et al., 2014).

Loyalty is tied to the Millennials' intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is defined as a state where individuals are willing to complete an activity because they have considered the activity as something that is interesting and pleasurable, rather than for some separate consequence (Mahmoud et al., 2020). Mahmoud's (2020) study established that Millennial intrinsic motivation, "values meaningful relationships, personal growth and making contributions, as these provide a higher level of contentment" (p. 6). Millennials are viewed as less loyal and trustworthy when supporting a business compared to the previous generations; therefore, they require strong motivators to inspire them to dedicate time, effort, and personal finances to support a cause (Mahmoud et al., 2020; Pontefract, 2018). When building loyalty, they place a high value in understanding the business' ethical behavior and contribution to society (Pontefract, 2018).

Previous studies defined the type of connecting points nonprofits use based on different intrinsic motivations and needs (Gorczyca & Hartman, 2017). When Gorczyca and Hartman (2017) studied Millennials' attitudes toward helping others, charitable organization and their intrinsic motivation, and how it was linked to their intent to donate, the researchers found a moderately strong and positive relationship. The study provided nonprofits the insight to root their communication and messaging strategy in intrinsic factors such as those that promoted enjoyment, showcased the value of the nonprofits' work and allowed Millennials to get to know the organization.

Understanding motivation is the foundation for engaging and involving Millennials, even before message construction can be examined. A study by Gorczyca and Hartman (2017) revealed that intent to donate is positive and strongly linked to their values of helping others, the charitable organization itself, and their intrinsic motivation. Millennial intrinsic motivation includes helping others and is engaged when the individual learns and resonates with the organizations' mission (Porter, 2019; Whillans, 2016).

These intrinsic values impact not only communication styles, but also spending behavior. Compared with Generation X and older generations, Millennials have just started their adult buying journey and development of purchasing habits (Nielsen, 2018). As a result, Millennials' spending power is only expected to increase over time. By using social media and connecting with Millennials' intrinsic motivators, nonprofits in the United States can meet the demands and needs of Millennials through the use of social media, mobile technology, and other online communication tools.

History of Visual Communication: Key Definitions

Communication tools have always taken the medium of either oral or visual (written and a combination of photos) communication. Oral communication occurs verbally and takes the form of tales that are passed within one's community or through the generations (Scott, 2015). Written communication occurs through the electronic or physical combination of words. What were once cave drawings, oral tales, and written words have become shareable on a mass scale with the introduction of the printing press and radio. Further technological advances have allowed visual communication to include photos and videos with a combination of audio (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012).

With multiple tools from which to employ, creators must use them with a level of understanding that each tool has its own value, but also complements the others. These innovations in communication include the printing press, telegraph, radio, and television. Further technological advances have led to the introduction of computers, mobile devices, and media technology. These technology innovations have expanded the window of opportunity to communicate messages through different formats (oral, text, photos, and video).

More than 4.5 billion people have visually received content on the web and social media through multimedia forms, such as video/photos, video, photos, and text (Kemp, 2020). These multimedia forms developed over time as communicators found themselves in a digital multimedia world with disruptive changes that have occurred on a regular basis. These disruptive changes referred to technological evolution and innovations. Innovations that affected the mode of communication include technology advancements, introduction of new social media platforms, algorithms, artificial intelligence, chatbots, and the emergence of 5G and other digital technology. The world wide web and the internet are the foundation for these technological innovations and home to multimedia content.

Current State of the World Wide Web

Organizations that are dependent on philanthropic donations from the public can benefit from the relationship-building potential of the internet (Olinski & Szamrowski, 2020; Šebestová & Šebestová, 2020). This is specifically significant for organizations that cannot afford public relations campaigns or programs. The internet has served as the most cost-effective and efficient communication tool for disseminating messages to a mass audience, as well as the most interactive communication channel for dialogic (two-way) interactions between organizations and stakeholders (Kwak et al., 2014).

The emergence of digital and wireless technology began with the introduction of the second phase of web, also known as Web 2.0. Established in late 2003, Web 2.0 differentiated the post-dotcom bubble world wide web as it grew to include social networking, user-generated content, and cloud computing (Krishnamurthy & Cormode, 2008; Tynan & Barnes, 2011). With the introduction of this stage, internet users were no longer passive users but contributed their thought through electronic communication (Allen, 2012). Cormode and Krishnamurthy (2008) described Web 2.0 as democratic in nature and “exemplified by creations of a large number of niche groups (collections of friends) who can exchange content of any kind (text, audio, video)” (para. 5).

Businesses slowly adopted the internet in the web 1.0 phase and began to build their brand reputation by creating websites for themselves with custom Uniform Resource Locators (URL). Web 2.0 revealed enormous potential, which brought in the development of businesses and stimulated the appearance and promotion of new concepts (Apăvăloaie, 2014). These concepts included the electronic business, electronic commerce, and online fundraising (McNutt, 2008).

The adoption of the internet was an important factor in technology adoption among nonprofit organizations (McMahon et al., 2015). Nonprofits had initially been slow to adopt the use of free websites and other web-based applications, which may be due to digital learning, budget size, time involved, and staff involvement (Briones et al., 2011; Saxton & Guo, 2011; Schneider, 2003; Young, 2010). As nonprofits’ focus turned to expand their communication strategy from traditional methods to digital ones, internet websites became prevalent within the nonprofit sector (Young, 2012). Regardless of slow adoption rates, internet websites and social media present opportunities for nonprofit relationship cultivation and new methods of

fundraising through online engagement (Hackler & Saxton, 2007; Waters, 2007). For instance, even early in the development of websites, software allowed visitors to donate to, or purchase from, the nonprofit with a click of a button (Marco et al., 2014).

Digital communication via the internet continued to evolve creating a more sophisticated infrastructure to showcase nonprofits' mission and work. In turn, this led to the development of digital portals for financial contribution. This occurred on the internet version known as Web 3.0, which was founded in 2006. Web 3.0 had two core ideas: web service and semantic markup (Lukácsy & Benkő, 2014). Web service enabled computer-to-computer interaction over the internet while semantic markup referred to the communication gap between human web users and computerized applications. Semantic markup refers to digital languages such as HyperText Markup Language (HTML). HTML is the standard markup language for documents designed to be displayed in a web browser (Tabarés, 2021).

While this era of the web allowed for an improved user experience, increased level of personalization and contextualized search, the mobile web brought an added level of technological advancement. Within this internet stage, websites became a valuable touchpoint for businesses and a strong avenue to establish online relationships with their visitors. A study analyzed the website roles in cultivating online relationships within the American nonprofit field through four stewardship strategies into their websites (Szamrowski & Olinski, 2020). The results showed that the size of the organization affected the implementation of stewardship strategies, but proved to be a particularly valuable construct in the public relations process by explicitly emphasizing the need for everlasting relationship cultivation with stakeholders (Szamrowski & Olinski, 2020). For organizations that allowed donations to be made from the

level of their own website, the use of strategies was shown to be particularly important to cultivate positive relationships with stakeholders.

Nonprofit organizations face a unique challenge of sharing fundraising and organizational information with interested stakeholders over the internet with limited financial resources and often limited technological expertise. Despite the potential learning curves, nonprofit organizations view the internet as a valuable channel to communicate their messages about their mission, donation use, and programs. Nonprofit team members have navigated through the learning curve through helpful resources and troubleshooting to create their websites (NLA Staff, 2020). This includes the use of website services (GoDaddy, Wix, and WordPress) that assist with the interface to absorb the learning curve.

A Mobile and Emerging Web. The mobile web (Web 4.0) is an alternate version of the modern-day web (Aghaei, 2012). With wireless network technology and Wi-Fi, Web 4.0 ensures real-time access to services in both the real and virtual world. Businesses have their mobile presence synced through websites, application programming interface (API), and/or mobile applications. In addition to being another digital touchpoint, mobile devices have allowed for the unique opportunity for an expanded presence and the acquirement of global donations (Zheng, 2020). The technology of a mobile donation can range from a donation from a mobile website, mobile application, social media page, mobile phone call, or third-party application for crowdfunding or crowdsourcing (Wang et al., 2017; Zheng, 2020).

Web 4.0 is two-fold in that it provides integration with mobile devices and creates a symbiotic web. The symbiotic web functions as a web with intelligent interactions (Bernal, 2010). Web 4.0 is also known as the symbiotic web in which the human mind and machines can interact in conjunction with each other. There is debate in terminology about the phase the web is

functioning today. The elements of the semantic, symbiotic, and mobile web are interwoven, while their services are being used and built on today. Most studies have concurred that modern-day technology users are interacting with a developing Web 4.0 phase (Almeida, 2017; Bernal, 2010; Choudhury, 2014).

Internet use involved the incorporation of computers and mobile devices. This provided nonprofits a diverse set of tools for website creation and social media profiles that acquired real-time feedback and engagement in genuine conversations with their stakeholders. The interactive nature of the internet enabled relationship-building engagement and enhanced nonprofit advocacy, accountability, and information delivery (Waters, 2007). While electronic communication has involved multiple technological devices and has occurred through modes such as the internet, social platforms, and airwaves, the medium remained the same, oral and/or visual (Almeida, 2017). These media combined to create a variety of multimedia.

E-Philanthropy

Online charitable giving, also known as e-philanthropy, has increased dramatically in the last decade both in the amount gathered and available formats (Giving, 2020; Waters, 2007). The goal of philanthropy is to improve the quality of human life such as promoting welfare, happiness, and the culture of mankind by creating value through financial contributions (Mon et al., 2019; Porter & Kramer, 1999). E-philanthropy took this practice to a digital space and globalized support of causes. Initially there was doubt that the action of a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens could change the world; however, research demonstrated the true potential that e-philanthropy offers (Giving, 2020).

Charitable giving in the United States has been trending upward in recent years, with Americans giving \$449.64 billion in 2019 (NPtrust, 2021). According to the statistics published

by the National Philanthropic Trust, this reflects a 5.1% increase from 2018. Those statistics are indicative of the extraordinary generosity of American citizens and have raised the question as to what motivates individuals to contribute time and money to charitable organizations, as well as which formats are being used to successfully fundraise.

Research showed that donations were received in response to traditional marketing (direct mail, checks, or phone lines), digital media (website, social media), nonprofit applications, and crowdfunding strategies (Giving, 2020; NPtrust, 2021). When observing the digital communications strategies for collecting charitable donations, the main connecting point is social media (McDonnell & Bhati, 2019). The uniqueness of social media is that it not only conveys a message, but it also provides an opportunity for direct feedback from users.

Charitable and non-profit organizations recognized the value of social media platforms as a tool to influence consumer responses, particularly among younger consumers (Mon et al., 2019). However, most nonprofits have used social media platforms to provide information about the organization and its mission rather than getting new supporters, raising money, or allowing beneficiaries or clients to interact (Korolov et al., 2016). By easily promoting information around the world, e-philanthropy quickly became a new trend in this age of interconnected society: a trend that had the potential to gain online donation from a wider number of audiences. The table below defines the types of online donation software:

Table 1*Categories and Donation Examples*

Type of Software	Example
Text	Text referral to traditional methods such as phone number or mailing address for checks
Link on Social Media	Giving through a link promoted on social media
Website Link	Giving portal embedded into a website (4.0)
Payment System	Giving through PayPal's online payments system
Crowdfunding	Patreon, Kickstarter, GoFundMe
Proprietary	Support via selling services or products

Multimedia

Given the bandwidth of modern-day technology, internet, wireless technology/5G, and cloud computing, the type of company created, and user-generated media content grew. What began as the use of the web to disseminate content associated with traditional communication (printed material or audio recordings), became multifaceted as Web 2.0 allowed a combination of different content forms such as text, audio, images, animations, or video within a single presentation (Newman, 2014). This provided an advantage for businesses looking for ways to expand their marketing strategies when communicating their messages.

Text and The Internet

The most common internet communication is based on text, a medium with tremendous strength (Anderson et al., 2019). Other influences such as the pen, voice, and body language have helped communicate text in a richer way. Mimicked after the human ability to communicate, users added emphasis to text through style choice, use of emoticons (invented in

1982), text abbreviations, and American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII) art (Jain & Ghai, 2019; Steinmetz, 2014). Text gave the viewer a clear call to action or description.

Photography and The Internet

It has been said that a picture is worth a thousand words (Walther et al., 2001). This truth has been evident in both life and online. Throughout the development of the internet, static visual media has evolved, resulting in a greater ease of viewing and an increased number image-sharing platforms (Scott, 2015). Visual forms such as images, photos, and pictures became increasingly popular marketing and public relations assets (Scott, 2015).

A photo can be defined as anything taken by a camera, digital camera, or photocopier (Scott, 2015). Meanwhile, pictures are drawings, paintings, or other forms of artwork such as infographics and memes that are, or have been, created on a computer, camera, or scanner (Scott, 2015). For the purpose of the present study, the term 'image' was used to cover all content types that refer to a digitally created, static visual found online.

The mere existence of images has been the foundation of social media platforms and image sharing sites that serve as add-ons to users' lives (Scott, 2015). The development of these sites fueled the creation and sharing of images both for the individual user and businesses to consumer levels (Dragilev, 2019). Images are used by organizations to strengthen their communication strategy and boost their brand image. The brand image refers to the logo, colors, font, and other visuals that assist in identifying the organization (Scott, 2015). Through Web 2.0, communicating with photos and images was the fastest-growing way to tell a story for organizations' audiences/consumers and became an essential tool to communicate an organization's brand message. Images are an important component of any organization's

communication plan, especially when it is combined with text-based content and video (Scott, 2015).

Video and the Internet

One medium that emerged from a combination of images, audio, and text is video (Scott, 2015). Video is a powerful, electronic medium for recording, copying, playback, broadcasting, and displaying moving visual media. Video connected audiences on an emotional level in the 1800s when film videography was established (Newman, 2014). Technological advances allowed film to become digitized and the internet/web 1.0 promised to integrate television, or at least video, into its virtually infinite potential range of offerings. It was not until Web 2.0 was released that the bandwidth became robust enough to allow for the transmission of data-heavy moving-image files.

Companies used these videos to add dimension to their websites and social media feeds. The purpose behind these videos were mainly testimonials or educational (Adelie, 2020). Video proved to be an instant success and helped grow businesses' communication strategies and reach. Studies found that when both video and text are available on the same page, 72% of people preferred using video to learn about a product or service. The same study found that 79% of consumers were convinced through a brand video to buy a piece of software or application (Wyzowl, 2020).

Video and Mobile Devices

With the wide availability of high-speed mobile internet and the constant-growing digital content landscape, mobile has overtaken desktop in terms of video viewership. According to a 2018 survey, 85% of United States internet users watched online video content on any device, with 62% of respondents having consumed online video via a mobile device (Clement, 2019).

The most popular online video-related applications are YouTube. There are two types of content businesses have produced to be watched on mobile devices: video advertising and/or original content designed for web and /or social media channels (Wyzowl, 2020).

Current State of Video

Studies have shown that online video consumption is one of the most popular internet activities worldwide. In 2018, 228.8 million viewers had watched online video content. With further innovations in internet, broadband, and mobile connectivity, viewers have had the ultimate viewing experience for online and mobile video content. According to Cisco, by 2021, every second, nearly 17,000 hours of video content will cross the network, and by 2022, video will make up 82% of all IP traffic (Khabab, 2020). As this field continues to grow, United States video viewers are projected to reach 248.9 million people in 2022 (Clement, 2019).

Format Types

As video has gained popularity (views) across social media platforms, both users and organizations have identified this a strong communication tool (Appel et al., 2019). As a response, organizations have created accounts on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. In addition to initiating accounts, businesses began creating and publishing visual content. A popular compatible online video format with social media is short-form, vertical videos content. Other social media aspect ratios include landscape (16:9), portrait (9:16), and mobile (2:3) (York, 2021). The length for any particular video depends entirely on the use case, channel, industry, and where it fits in the communication strategy. Studies have suggested that marketing videos should be two minutes or less (Gillespie, 2021).

Popular applications that demonstrated the power of this bite-size, user-generated content were Vine, Snapchat, TikTok, and Instagram Reels. Vine and some of TikTok's features became

unavailable due to company bankruptcy or legal/security issues (Brown, 2020). Snapchat is still thriving with a daily audience of 265 million active users, which is a 18% increase from the year prior (Tankovska, 2021). In 2018, Snapchat mainstreamed augmented reality (AR) through its filters and allowed for external developers to create their own AR content. According to Snap Inc., more than 170 million people use its augmented-reality tools daily, a sign that the technology is going mainstream (Frier, 2020).

Current Nonprofit Social Media Use

Nonprofit Tech for Good produced a biennial research project that analyzed 5,721 global non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to gain a better understanding of NGO's use of technology (Funraise, 2019). To establish their online presence, 97% of American and Canadian NGOs own their own website. While NGOs viewed websites as being the most effective way to reach their audience, the study found that social media was ranked fourth (83%), with video following in fifth place (81%) (Funraise, 2019).

Of the United States and Canadian NGOs surveyed, the social media platforms most used were Facebook (95%), Instagram (56%), Twitter (64%), LinkedIn (37%), and YouTube (30%) (Funraise, 2019). To ensure measurable goals and a fixed target audience, a written strategy for a company's social media marketing is crucial. Only 40% of NPOs in the United States & Canada have a written social media strategy, while 48% use an editorial calendar for their social media campaigns (Funraise, 2019).

Most NPOs had a growth mindset when approaching social media and technology. A study showed that 48% of NPOs increased spending on technology and 74% report that their nonprofits' board helps their use of social media (Funraise, 2019). Of those surveyed, 96% agreed that social media is effective for online brand awareness while 69% agree that social

media are effective for online fundraising (Funraise, 2019). This high usage rate of utilizing social media as an online donation tool correlated with the statistic that states the United States has the highest rate and worldwide use of online donations (85%) (NPSsource, 2019).

Social Media Platforms

The technology that assisted in mass-production and distribution of communication messages brought with it the power for one voice or a series of voices to reach and affect many people. Social media is a digital form of mass communication that has its own unique value. Video and image content are bound by the social media platforms' constraints and preferences. Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter all have varying dimensions and, with that, unique opportunities.

The social media platforms that were used in this study have stood the test of time, surpassed a billion users, and drew a high millennial demographic. These platforms were Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019). These sites are free and have built-in interactivity. Interactivity can be defined as the range of reactions such as likes, hearts/love, and other emoticons, comments, and shares (Alcorn et al., 2017). Any organization can create a site and build a network of friends and followers who can be interacted with in real-time (synchronous). However, social media allows for asynchronous communication, which allows the sender to send a message without expecting an immediate response (Jhala & Menon, 2020). This strengthens the two-way communication that occurs online. Studies have extensively examined corporate and nonprofit uses of social media (Lin, 2020; Marco et al., 2014; Szamrowski & Olinski, 2020).

Facebook

Facebook is by far the largest social platform on the planet with 2.4 billion monthly active users (Koetsier, 2020). Pew Research found that 68% of Americans use Facebook and 74% of those users check it daily (Smith & Anderson, 2018). Users can comment and like posts to interact with the content. The Facebook “Like” button functions as a social cue that allows users to convey various meanings, while responding with multiple interpersonal functions (Sumner, et al., 2017).

The content is curated by the user’s follower preferences or targeted advertising that is customized to the user’s demographic. Facebook allows for individuals and businesses alike to post regular and 360-degree images and video content, in addition to paid advertising, live video, 24-hour stories, fundraising opportunities, and chat services (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019). Facebook is no stranger to video. Between video advertising, video posts, stories and live streams, Facebook videos have over eight billion views a day. Additionally, Facebook video posts account for 11% of the created Facebook posts (Michalski, 2019).

M & R Benchmarks (2020a) conducted a study regarding nonprofit social media use, fundraising, and web metrics. The results showed that Facebook giving accounted for 3.5% of all online revenue. This study also found that each organic Facebook post published only reached four percent of a nonprofit page’s fans. Reach referred to the total number of unique people who saw the piece of content (York, 2020). This meant that the level of reach was significantly lower for those who were followers compared to Facebook users. For instance, reach by any given post was up to 28% of the audience that was not already following the nonprofit (Benchmarks, 2020b).

Nonprofit engagement and shareholder participation on Facebook have been a focus in several studies that assisted in defining cultural impact, organizational capacity, motivations for giving, and engagement (Asencio & Sun, 2018; Hugo & Sun, 2018; Lo & Waters, 2012; Smith, 2018). Each of the findings supported the fact that social media has the potential to engage stakeholders, constituents of nonprofit organizations, and highlighted areas for further research.

Most research that involved Facebook metrics and interaction focused on measuring the content and structure of organizational profiles. A study was done by Walters and Saxton (2014) who gauged social media engagement based on what organizational content individual stakeholders preferred on Facebook in terms of liking, commenting, and sharing. In that study, a content analysis of 1,000 updates from organizations on the *Nonprofit Times 100* list revealed that individuals preferred dialogic, as well as certain forms of mobilizational, messages; however, they were more likely to share one-way informational messages with their own networks.

Instagram

Instagram is an American photo and video sharing social networking service, owned by Facebook that originally launched on Apple's operating system in October 2010. With more than a billion users, Instagram is an active social network and a hub of eye-catching visuals (Koetsier, 2020; Ortiz-Ospina, 2019). Sixty-three percent of users are between the ages of 18 and 34, and nearly evenly split between male and female users (Kellogg, 2020). Since its launch, Instagram continues to increase in daily active users. Studies revealed that Instagram's unique value is the highly visually geared content that can be used by individuals and nonprofit groups to reach different types of constituencies (Kemp, 2020; Smith, 2018).

Through Instagram, organizations have effectively gained a loyal following with the assistance of filtered photos, compelling captions, and video content (Lauro et al., 2019). Instagram photo content can be published and accessed through traditional posts, stories, shoppable posts, highlights, and sponsored posts. Video sharing is also relevant as traditional posts and stories, as well as vertical video formatted services like IGTV and Reels.

Nonprofit Tech for Good produced a biennial research project that analyzed 5,721 global non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to gain a better understanding of NGOs' use of technology (Funraise, 2019). Of the United States nonprofits, 56% use Instagram with an average of 7,862 Instagram followers (Funraise, 2019). The research revealed that 56% of the nonprofits share Instagram Stories and use Instagram Live (Funraise, 2019).

An M & R Benchmarks' (2020) study tracked nonprofit growth on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. The results showed that Instagram was the fastest growing of platforms tracked, with a 42% increase in the number of followers compared to 2019 data. This is noteworthy growth compared to the nonprofits' growth of seven percent increase of Twitter followers, while Facebook pages grew by four percent (Benchmarks, 2020a).

Instagram has been a tenet in nonprofit communication research, but not to the extent of Facebook and Twitter (Majedah, 2017). The strategic communication literature mainly focused on questions of how brands can use Instagram or analysis of Instagram's conceptual framework structure (Huang et al., 2019; Svensson & Russmann, 2016). While there was minimal nonprofit research in regard to Instagram, one study found there was an increasing benefit to engage stakeholders via dialogic and community-building practices by using Twitter and Instagram compared to websites (Majedah, 2017).

Twitter

Twitter is a microblogging and social networking service in which users post and interact with messages known as “Tweets” (Twitter, 2020). There are over 330 million monthly active users and 145 million daily active users on Twitter (Lin, 2020). The primary user segment of Twitter users’ demographic falls between 35- and 65-year-olds. Unlike the other social media platforms, about two-thirds of users are male (Lin, 2020).

For 11 years, Twitter had a 140-character limit. However, in 2017, the network increased the limit to 280 characters (Jackson, 2020). Studies revealed that Tweets with 100 characters get 17% higher engagement rates than longer Tweets (Callahan, 2020). With only 280 characters, organizations have to be conscious of the main point they are trying to make. Users, in turn, have decided how much they want to know by either reading the tweet alone or, to learn more, by clicking on the links that are often included in organizational tweets (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). On Twitter, businesses have had an opportunity to craft and hone their voice through tweeting, continuing threads, reposting content, and incorporating photos and video content (Kellogg, 2020).

Twitter has been instrumental in nonprofit communication research and has provided valuable literature for future studies. Studies have analyzed stakeholder engagement (Dong & Rim, 2019; Lovejoy et al., 2012), use of links (Tully et al., 2019), and nonprofit follower relationships (Fu, 2019). Fu’s (2019) study on follower-followee networks discovered that nonprofit Twitter audiences maintained strong loyalty to the nonprofit.

Research showed that Twitter helped nonprofits to better interact with their stakeholders, which in turn has increased their capacity to build an online community through microblogging (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) found evidence of a variety of ways

organizations used Twitter to promote their organizations and mobilize supporters. Nonprofits' Twitter promotion and mobilization functions helped bolster the organizations' general social media presence on other platforms. Other content analysis of nonprofit organizations' Twitter updates has been done to continue to define the frequency of dialogic communication and through it, as a group, nonprofit organizations are using Twitter to distribute one-way messages (Lovejoy et al., 2012; Waters & Jamal, 2011).

YouTube

As of 2020, the largest site for viewing and publishing video content was Google Sites, which included the online video-sharing platform YouTube (Clement, 2020; YouTube, 2020). YouTube is an online video-sharing platform that has over two billion monthly logged-in users (Koetsier, 2020; YouTube, 2020). Every day, people watch over a billion hours of video and generate billions of views (YouTube, 2020).

With nearly 200 million American viewers on YouTube, content creators and businesses understand the opportunity this platform provides (Clement, 2020). With opportunity comes competition and a possibility of an oversaturated market. Over 500 hours of video were uploaded to YouTube every minute and the numbers continue to rise (Clement, 2020; YouTube, 2020). YouTube functions have offered nonprofits the option to create a regular, business, or nonprofit YouTube account. YouTube Nonprofit Program allowed nonprofit creators to link cards, YouTube Giving features, and Creator Academy access as well as the option to shoot and edit videos at YouTube's global creator studios (Google, 2020). Regardless of the account type, research showed that 28% of United States nonprofits are on YouTube (NPSOURCE, 2019).

YouTube videos are increasingly being used by organizations to educate and inform just as much as they are to entertain (Jones & Waters, 2011). Research has focused on the content of

leading nonprofit videos. One study found that nonprofit organizations primarily used their YouTube videos to inform and educate viewers about their missions, programs, and services (Febriyantoro & Wright, 2020). While videos covered the above topics, nonprofit organizations did not optimize their engagement potential through direct appeals for involvement (Jones & Waters, 2011). The study found that nonprofits were more likely to use external testimonies and environments to build the videos' narratives rather than using internal stakeholders' testimonies. Other studies also analyzed nonprofit advocacy organizations' use of YouTube in regard to messaging content and audience engagement (Auger, 2013; Ciszek, 2013). Auger's (2013) and Ciszek's (2013) studies showed that there was a positive correlation between an increase of call to action and nonprofit reach.

Social Media Unique Value

The unique value that each social media has provided to an organization's communication strategy and the incorporation of multiple platforms has had several benefits for an organization's online presence (Business, 2013). These benefits included improved search engine rankings, strong customer service, competition engagement, and most importantly, audience reach (Britten, 2019). Audience reach refers to the number of people that would be able to view a piece of media content on its published platform. Audience reach has proven to be a crucial element and an end goal of an organization's communication plan to foster engagement and increase awareness (Britten, 2019). Given the services provided, each social media platform gathered a different audience segmentation or demographic. Nonprofit organizations have found that, by only using one platform, they are limited to specific kinds of media, as well as the audience they can reach.

For instance, Instagram's content is mainly visual, with less scope for text. Facebook allowed for visuals with more room for text and other formats such as 360 images and video. The video-sharing platform YouTube allowed for longer video content. Twitter is the ideal status update platform for sending short messages with attached links. This diversity created a slight issue and a window of opportunity when organizations devised buyer personas for marketing purposes (Pew, 2019).

Studies showed that it is hard to describe the archetypal customer as an individual who uses just one particular social media platform in this digital age (Bonchek & France, 2016). Organizations must consider the platform's primary user (demographic) and how they interact with the media (types of content). Since each platform has its own unique value, organizations should use a variety of social media as tools in their communication strategy. It is important to note that the number of social media platforms used, and the depth of their online presence speaks to the organization's technology adoption. Given those elements, the following research question is proposed:

RQ 1: To what extent are religious nonprofits establishing their online and social media presence?

Diffusion Theory and Organizational Adoption of Innovations

The implementation of emerging technologies and digital communication tools by religious, media-related nonprofit organizations is theoretically rooted in the Diffusion of Innovations (DIT) (Rogers, 2003). Examination of the adoption rate of digital communication tools, such as social media, offered an understanding both of the nonprofit and the recipient. The nonprofit may choose to use a digital communication tool, but the effectiveness of innovation

adoption decisions is limited unless its audience engages with that medium by following and interacting with the content.

The range of effectiveness surrounding digital communication tools is explained in Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations Theory. Rogers' study highlighted that there are different ways an innovation diffuses in a social system, but interpersonal communication was the most important. Regardless of whether innovativeness is being analyzed against an organization's size or time, Rogers (2003) defines innovativeness as "the degree to which an individual or other unit of adoption is relatively earlier in adopting new ideas than other members of the system" (p. 22). An innovation can be an idea, object or practice which is new to the members of the society (Roger, 2003; Janssen et al., 2019). DIT categorized adopters into five types based on stages in the innovation process: innovator, early adopter, early majority, late majority, and laggards.

The individual level of adoption begins with innovators who are venturesome and the first 2.5% to have embraced the new technology. Early adopters implemented the technology next (13.5%) and have the highest degree of opinion leadership in most systems (Rogers, 2003). Those known as the early majority adopt the technology deliberately (34%), while the late majority join in due to external pressures (34%). Laggards, who remained traditional in nature and being suspicious of innovation, are the last level (16%) and do not adopt the new technologies (Lyytinen & Damsgaard, 2001).

Influencing an individual's level of adoption are perceived characteristics of an innovation. These can either contribute positively or negatively to adoption. They consist of these characteristics: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability (Rogers, 2003). Relative advantage has occurred when the individual weighed the benefits

against the costs when adopting an innovation. Individuals have to consider their compatibility with the innovation against their values, previous experience with similar innovations, and insight. Since any new idea is evaluated in comparison to existing practices, compatibility is considered related to the rate of adoption of an innovation. For instance, social media success was evaluated in comparison to traditional marketing methods, but also faced technology adoption variables (Smith & Anderson, 2018).

The third perceived characteristic assessed the level of complexity associated with the innovation. Rogers (2003) noted that the higher the complexity is perceived, the less likely the individual is to adopt. Observability occurred when the individual had first seen the innovation being used. The final perceived characteristic is trialability and has occurred more often when the individual used it for themselves prior to their purchase or use of the given software or innovation.

Innovation adoption can also occur on an organizational level. Rogers (2003) defined organization adoption as the adoption of a given innovation within a business or organizational context. This type of adoption is impacted by the organization's resources, need, and may require adaptation of the innovation's use or an organization's structure. Adaptation is defined by changes made to an innovation by implementers who serve intended beneficiaries (i.e., leadership) (Rogers, 2003).

Rogers (2003) listed two main motivations for why an organization might adopt an innovation. The first motivation is dependent on the individual and is optional in nature. For example, if a nonprofit were to implement/adopt social media, the first motivation would be based on the individual when each person makes a decision to adopt. This decision to adopt is what Rogers called the first step of motivation. The second motivation refers to the

organizational leadership's agreement and decision to implement an innovation such as social platforms.

There are a variety of factors that have impacted the implementation of innovation in an organizational setting. These have included organizational structure, which refers to the management, available resources, and employees' positive or negative perspectives (Rogers, 2003). Rogers' studies also have found that the degree of innovativeness is correlated with the size of an organization and, as a result, larger organizations are more innovative. For the present study's purposes, the definition of "larger" is based on the nonprofit's amount of revenue. Given that element, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: The extent of digital innovation will differ based on when the organization was founded, and larger religious nonprofit organizations will have a higher level of digital innovation as seen in the nonprofits' total social media number of posts.

Past communication research has used DIT as a theoretical framework to explain the growth of social media and its diffusion within nonprofits (Nah & Saxton, 2012). While there are a variety of factors that impact the implementation of innovation in an organizational setting, there are also constructs defined by Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations that impact the diffusion of the innovation. In DIT, time factors in to serve as an important role in defining adoption rate and a technology's innovativeness. The time dimension is often impacted by the means of the respondents' recall; however, it played an active role in the innovative-decision process in the following three ways.

First, innovation begins at the knowledge stage and, upon interaction with the technology, the individual has two options: they can adopt or reject the innovation (Rogers, 2003). Secondly, time can then be measured against the adoption and success compared to other

members of a system. Lastly, time is reflected and judged by the number of members of the system who adopt the innovation in any given time period.

The time dimension is involved in the Diffusion of Innovations with the topic of rate of adoption. Diffusion is defined as the relative speed with which an innovation is adopted by members of an organization. The rate of adoption is usually measured by the length of time required for a certain percentage of the members of a system to adopt an innovation. Regardless, time served as an overarching and important factor in the determination of social media adoption and success. Given the importance of time, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H2: The extent of adoption of social media platforms will differ based on when the organization was founded so that organizations founded earlier will use more social platforms.

Previous Research About Nonprofits

In an age of generation and technology shifts, nonprofits are challenged to engage a new generation of future donors, while they face competition and limited resources. The need for growth largely falls on philanthropic donations. This drives nonprofits to engage and create relationships with the public through available communication tools, specifically Internet-based communication strategies. With the Baby Boomer donor pool shrinking, nonprofits must reach the Millennial generation. This will require a shift to a greater use of digital communication tools, which include social media.

Research showed that, to receive a philanthropic donation, a nonprofit generally must establish a relationship with that individual (Gorczyca & Hartman, 2017; Jones, 2018; Ostrander, 2007; Wiepking et al., 2021). This relationship is developed over trust, mutual values, and connecting with its audience's intrinsic motivations and needs (Gorczyca & Hartman, 2017). As a result, the following research question(s) will be examined.

RQ1: To what extent are religious nonprofits establishing their online and social media presence?

RQ 2: With regards to social media and religious, media-related nonprofits, is there a relationship between levels of interactivity and the number of followers?

Despite the substantial adoption of nonprofit social media use and fundraising application, research in this area is still applicable. There have been studies centered on the dialogic nature of nonprofits on Facebook and Twitter in addition to message content analysis (Dong & Rim, 2019; Lovejoy et al., 2012; Waters & Saxton, 2014). Although previous research established there is a positive link between using social media platforms to foster engagement with stakeholders/donors and its strong relevance to Millennials, a clear understanding of best practices in leveraging social media for fundraising with a Millennial focus remains scattered across different disciplines (Lauro et al., 2019).

In Chapter 3, the researcher describes the methodology by analyzing nonprofit adoption rate, online presence, and e-philanthropy technology use on the nonprofit's website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. Previous research concerning nonprofit social media and online donation software was discovered in a variety of different fields (i.e., philanthropy, business, and communication). Additionally, the majority of the research used data that dated over five years. With digital communication tools rapidly advancing, there was a need to analyze more recent or current nonprofit social media presence and practices. Previous extensive research agendas did not study the link between audience giving, online donation software, and their messages shared by charitable non-profit organizations. To address these gaps and build on current research concerning nonprofit social media use and financial contributions within an online environment, the study asked the following research question:

RQ 3: What is the relationship between an organization having online donation links and the revenue of the organization?

Chapter 3

Method

This research used quantitative content analysis to analyze data that was associated with the hypotheses and research questions. The investigation used *t*-tests, Pearson correlations, and ANOVAs to test the nonprofits' social media use, activity, and audience interactivity. The researcher collected all the listed religious, media-related nonprofits from ProPublica's Nonprofit Explorer (ProPublica, 2021). For the social media, online giving technology, and time attributes data, the researcher collected the metrics from each nonprofit's website and social media platforms.

This chapter provides a discussion of the steps used to analyze the nonprofits. First, the researcher explained the search query and tool used to collect the list of religious, media-related nonprofits. Second, she explained the method to gather social media, online giving technology, and time attributes data on nonprofit's website and select social media channels. Some interesting interactions between attributes that arose in this step suggest potential for correlations that will be addressed in the discussion section. Finally, the researcher presents the statistical software used to analyze data and the statistical approach that was taken.

Step I: Data Collection— Defining the Sample Pool

To define the United States religious nonprofits, the researcher defined a specific search query and ran it through ProPublica's Nonprofit Explorer. Founded in 2008, the Nonprofit Explorer serves as a database that provides tax returns and full Form 990 documents to every organization that is recognized as tax-exempt by the IRS (Schwencke et al., 2021). The ProPublica search query allowed for the following filters to be applied to any search: state, major nonprofit categories, and organization type. State refers to the location within the United States

of America (Schwencke et al., 2021). Major nonprofit categories include arts, culture, humanities, education, environment/animals, religion-related, and others. For the purposes of this study, “Religion-Related” was selected. The search query can also be defined by 501 classification and so 501(c)(3) was chosen.

The researcher defined the search query as follows: “Media” > Religion-Related > 501(c)(3).” From this query’s results, the researcher selected 144 nonprofits marked as “religious media” as defined by the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE). This thesis’ focus was on religious nonprofit organizations (NPOs) that were media related. The National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) identifies each nonprofit and codes them for identification. The NTEE religious media categories can be broken down into: Religious Media/Communication Organizations, Religious Radio, Religious Film/Video, and Religious Printing/Publishing.

To eliminate any oversights, the researcher confirmed that the selected nonprofits aligned with the definition of a religious nonprofit set forth in this study. These categories gathered to form a nominal grouping variable entitled NPTtype. The full definitions as given by the NTEE are represented below in Table 2 (Jones D. , 2019):

Table 2

Terminology of NTEE X80 Religious Nonprofits

Categories

X81 Religious Film & Video: Organizations with religious affiliations that are engaged in video productions and films which have religious content.

X82 Religious Television: Organizations with religious affiliations that are engaged in television productions and broadcasts which have religious content.

X83 Religious Printing, Publishing: Organizations with religious affiliations that are engaged in written publications and publishing which have religious content.

Z84 Religious Radio: Organizations with religious affiliations that are engaged in radio productions and broadcasts which have religious content.

A breakdown of the 144 nonprofits studied in the NTEE categories revealed that 92 of the 144 nonprofits were categorized as religious media, communication organizations (65%). Thirty-one nonprofits were categorized as religious radio (22%), while 10 were categorized as religious film and video (7%). The breakdown further revealed that there are only 11 religious printing and publishing nonprofits (7%). The categories were calculated into a nominal variable entitled “NPType” for future data analysis. The NTEE categories provided the researcher a strong foundation which allowed her to organize the gathered nonprofits. This organization assisted in dividing and comparing the data when running the statistical tests.

Nonprofit Data and Attributes

To gather and evaluate the necessary data, a set of criteria was created per category. These categories included online presence, social media, online giving technology, and time attributes. Each of the categorical criteria will be outlined in this chapter which will lay the foundation of the methodology and statistical approach.

Online Presence Attributes

When gathering the initial social media, website, and NTEE nonprofit information, the researcher discovered whether or not the nonprofit owned a website and social media. The researcher then defined the level of online presence based on the nonprofit’s website and social media presence.

Nonprofits that did not have any online presence (i.e., website or social media) were categorized as “inactive.” Nonprofits that only had websites to represent them were categorized as “website.” Nonprofits that had a website and at least one open social media account open, but did not post on the platform during 2021 were categorized as “No Posts.” Nonprofits that had a website and two or more social media accounts that contained multiple postings throughout January 2021 were categorized as “Social Media.”

A breakdown of the four online presence levels revealed that 46 of the 144 (32%) nonprofits were inactive and did not have any online presence. Twenty of the 144 (14%) nonprofits only had a website for their online presence. Additionally, 25 of the 144 nonprofits had a website and at least one open social media account but did not post on the platform during 2021. Finally, 54 of the 144 nonprofits (38%) had an active presence online that was demonstrated by a website and two or more social media accounts that contained multiple postings throughout January 2021.

Inactivity

Regardless of the sample size of nonprofits examined in this study, it is important to note the inactivity level of these nonprofits. Being a media-centric nonprofit, their understanding as to the existence of social platforms and websites should be greater than those who are not media centric. As a result, the researcher would expect that the media nonprofits would use a variety of communication tools.

Thirty-two percent (N=20) of the nonprofits were inactive which indicated no digital touchpoint for the nonprofit to connect with their audiences. These inactive sites did not have the year that the nonprofit was founded readily available, but the researcher was able to locate the

year in which the nonprofit became official tax exempt. A descriptive summary was done on each level of nonprofit online presence (See Table 3).

Table 3

Descriptive Summary of Continuous Measures

	Inactive	Website	Social Media	No Posts
N	20	25	54	20
Missing	59	54	25	59
Mean	2013	2012	2011	2013
Standard deviation	5.83	9.26	11.1	5.83

Excluded Inactive Values. The majority of inactive nonprofits received tax-exempt status from 2001-2004. ProPublica (2021) sources suggested that nonprofits that were founded earlier may no longer be active due to retirement. This is supported by tracking IRS and tax form history (ProPublica, 2021). For the nonprofits that have been granted tax-exempt status within the last five years, ProPublica suggested that they are just establishing their nonprofit both physically and online. Given the larger percentage of inactive nonprofits and therefore, the lack of social media data, the researcher excluded the 46 inactive nonprofits from analysis.

Excluded Inactive Nonprofit Types. While reducing the nonprofits due to inactivity, the researcher discovered that 31 of the 46 nonprofits were religious media, communication organizations (67%). Twelve religious radio nonprofits (26%) were flagged as inactive, while only two religious film and video nonprofits (5%) were inactive. Only one religious printing and publishing nonprofit was flagged inactive (2%).

Sample Pool Redefined. The “Inactivity” criterion ultimately excluded 46 nonprofits from the sample pool and analysis due to the lack of relevant data. This left 98 nonprofits to be included in the sample pool. All of the 98 nonprofits had an active online presence via a website and at least one social media platform.

Social Media Attributes

The selected social media networks used in this study represented the leading, most visited social media sites and have Millennials as their target audience (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019). For research data purposes, the information that was gathered from each organization’s social media sites was defined and then gathered from Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. The gathered information is defined in the following table:

Table 4

Social Media Attribute Definitions

Attribute	Definition
Followers	The number of users who have subscribed to the nonprofits’ social media feed.
Total Published Posts	The total number of published posts/content on a social media platform published since its existence.
Date Joined	The month and year the nonprofit joined the platform—see time attributes.
Days Since Posted	The number of days from January 31, 2021 since the nonprofit posted.
Interactivity	The total range of interactions received during January 2021 on each social media platform.

Additionally, the data associated with the posts on all four social media platforms examined in this study were analyzed for the month of January 2021. This was compiled into a continuous variable for each social media platform entitled the nonprofit examined and “Jan Total.” This was approached by creating an interactivity score for each social media platform and allowed for further analysis of how nonprofits were using social platforms (RQ1).

The variable data sets revealed how many nonprofits were using each of the following social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. This data set also revealed that nonprofits used multiple platforms and made accounts on more than one platform. The findings and breakdown of total number of social media used is listed in Table 5:

Table 5

RQ3 Nonprofit Use by Platform

	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter	YouTube
Total Nonprofit Accounts	79	36	48	43
Percentage of total sampled nonprofits that are using the given platform.	81%	38%	49%	44%

Interactivity Score. When analyzing audience interactivity on social media, the researcher looked at each of the social media platform’s options for audience responses and gathered the total interactivity each post received during January 2021. This data was gathered during the week of March 1, 2021.

The Internet is a two-way medium, and for sites to excel at interactivity, it must gather people together and promote communication among Web users and organization management

(Chung, 2008; Greer & Ferguson, 2011). Digital platforms have created different dynamics for responses, particularly due to the nature of interactivity (Bubaris, 2014). While there are numerous definitions of interactivity that can explain the range of this term, a helpful way that scholars have conceptualized interactivity is through the distinction of medium interactivity from human interactivity (Chung, 2008; Lee, 2000; Stromer-Galley, 2004). Medium interactivity, also known as content interactivity, is interactive communication between users and technology that is based on the functionality and constraints of the technology (Chung, 2008). On the other hand, human interactivity, also known as interpersonal interactivity, is communication between two or more users that takes place through a communication channel (Bhati & McDonnell, 2019; Lo & Waters, 2012; Waters & Saxton, 2014).

For the purposes of this study, interactivity is defined as the type of responses an individual uses to interact with a social media post whether that be text, photo, video, or a combination of that content. Those responses ranged from reactions (i.e., likes/love), video views, shares, and comments (Greer & Ferguson, 2011). The range that constructs interactivity is on a continuum of medium to human interactivity. Interactive features that characterize medium interactivity include re-sharing posts and reacting to posts, while human interactivity is comprised of comments (Chung, 2008). Since each social medium has a varying degree of terminology, the following table defines the combination of responses per platform:

Table 6*Interactivity Definitions*

Interactivity Type	Interactivity Functions
Facebook	The total combination of Facebook reactions (likes, love, wow, sad, and dislike), shares, and comments.
Instagram	The total combination of Instagram likes, video views, and comments.
Twitter	The total combination of Twitter likes, retweets, and comments.
YouTube	The total combination of YouTube likes, views, and comments.

Online Giving Technology Attributes

This thesis sought to measure the use of e-philanthropy and the methods of how the nonprofit was requesting donations on their website and social media platforms. A donation can vary from an amount of money or an item. In the case of donation gathering, each type of donation requires (1) the donor's name, (2) the amount of money or a description of the item or items donated, and (3) a statement indicating whether or not any goods or services were provided in return for the gift. This includes a statement indicating that "intangible religious benefits" were provided, but they have no monetary value for tax purposes (Expert, 2020).

The type of donation was not a variable taken into consideration, but the donation's mechanism type of how the donation was requested was considered (i.e., link, software,

crowdfunding). The first variable clarified the nonprofit use of requesting donations on their websites (yes/no). The researcher used categorizations when defining what call to actions (CTAs) the nonprofit was promoting online. This varied from text CTAs, online links, and other online giving technology types. The categorization of donations type found online is defined by Table 6. The researcher noted the overall usage of these categories and listed the number of nonprofits that used each type of digital fundraising or the lack thereof (see Table 7).

Table 7

Online Giving Technologies Use

	Website Link	Payment System	Crowdfunding	Text	Link on Social Media	Propriety	None
N	30	24	2	3	7	15	18

Taking the 98 nonprofits, the researcher then assigned a number (1-6) to each category listed in Table 1. This created a grouping variable in preparation for determining if there was any relationship between an organization having online donation links and the size of the organization (RQ3). Due to the variety in the amount of each category, equal variances were not assumed, and a Welch's *t*-test was used.

Time Attributes

With an emphasis placed on Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory (DIT), the time attributes category is worth clarifying (2003). In Rogers' DIT, to best determine the diffusion and adoption of social media among the nonprofits, the researcher defined the terminology to guide data collection. This included "Year Founded," "Ruling Year," and the "Year Joined." The attribute "Year Founded" refers to the year the nonprofit officially began, whereas the attribute "Ruling Year" refers to the year the nonprofit became officially tax-exempt. The year the

nonprofit joined Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube were also gathered for data. The year was found under page transparency for Facebook. The year the organization started used Twitter's nonprofit's account biography to find the "Year Joined" attribute. YouTube was found under the "About" tab on the nonprofit's profile.

Before and After 2004 Attribute. In the process of gathering data, the year the nonprofit was founded was gathered from the web for data purposes. Neither ProPublica nor the nonprofit's website prominently offered this information. This data was mostly found on social media "About" sections (i.e., LinkedIn). Once the information for year founded was located, the researcher divided this information into the following two categories: 1) Before 2004, and 2) 2004 and after.

The year 2004 was chosen based on the historical development of the web and introduction of Facebook, which mainstreamed social media use. The foundation of leading social media platforms occurred in the early 2000s (Freyman, 2020). LinkedIn launched in May 2003, Facebook launched in February 2004, and Twitter launched in July 2006.

As addressed in Chapter 2, each of these social media platforms has over three million active daily users worldwide. By dividing the nonprofits before 2004 and 2004 and after, the researcher tested H2 and determined if there was any relationship between the extent of social media platforms adopted and when the organization was founded.

Manual Collection of Data

Once the attributes were defined, data was manually collected. To gather and evaluate social media, online giving technology, and time attributes, the researcher divided the data into variables. First, the nonprofit websites were located, since 85% of the nonprofit's social media information and donation tab is often hosted on the home page. Then, social media attributes

were gathered from Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. Lastly, the time attributes were gathered.

Statistical Approach: Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were established for this thesis to look at nonprofit digital innovation and the extent of social media adoption. H1: The extent of digital innovation will differ based on when the organization was founded, and larger religious nonprofit organizations will have a higher level of digital innovation as seen in the nonprofits' total social media number of posts. The term larger refers to the nonprofit's amount of revenue. The verbiage and findings of HI are centered on Rogers' (2003) DIT adoption construct.

To best test H1, the researcher performed a Pearson Correlation. The Pearson Correlation compares two interval/ratio variables and shows the linear relationship between two or more continuous variables (Jamovi, 2021c; Statistics, 2021). Determining the Pearson's r value allowed the researcher to observe the strength and direction of the relationship between the given two variables. If the p -value is .05 or lower, it suggests that the results are significant and there is a low probability that the results of the test were arrived at purely by chance (Jamovi, 2021c).

For the Pearson Correlation test, the dependent variable was the total amount of posts found on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. This total amount included the number of posts published since the organization signed up for an account. For Facebook and Twitter, this included posts that consisted of photos, text, and video posts. For Instagram, the post type was constrained to photos and videos due to the platform's publishing tools. On YouTube, the post type referred to the original videos published on the nonprofit's account. The continuous data across all platforms was collected from March 3 to 6, 2021.

The independent variable used to test the first hypothesis was defined as the nonprofit's total revenue for the 2018-2019 tax year. The data was taken from the nonprofit's 990 tax form or additional tax form links located on the ProPublica (2020) nonprofit's homepage. The dependent variable was the total amount of posts published on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube during the nonprofit's online existence.

H2 stated: The extent of adoption of social media platforms will vary based on when the organization was founded, so that organizations founded earlier will have wider social media presence. The verbiage and findings of H2 are centered on Rogers' (2003) DIT time construct. To test H2, the researcher performed an independent samples *t*-test. The test begins with the assumption that data from each group are from a normal distribution and that the variances of these groups are equal (Jamovi, 2021c). If the variances are not equal the test must be rerun as a Welch *t*-test. A low *p*-value suggests that the null hypothesis is not true and, therefore, the group means are different (Statistics, 2021).

For the independent *t*-test, the dependent variable was the total number of social media platforms used by each organization. First, to gather this nominal variable, the researcher located each nonprofit's presence on social media per platform. If they had the observed platform (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube), the researcher indicated the platform's existence by a "1," which meant "yes." The platforms that did not exist on the social media platform were marked by a "0," which meant "no." The existence and use of each social platform was totaled to create the continuous variable known as the total amount of social media platforms (see Appendix A).

The grouping independent variable for this test was based on whether or not the nonprofit was founded before 2004 or after 2003 and entitled "PRE/POST2004." To collect the data for

this variable, the researcher found the year that each nonprofit joined the platform and organized them. This information was found and gathered from the nonprofit's website or the nonprofit's LinkedIn profile.

As explained in Chapter 2, nonprofits that existed prior to 2004 relied more on traditional communication strategies and at the time did not have the digital media to communicate compared to nonprofits that were founded after 2004. This does not mean the earlier nonprofits did not have social accounts, but could have experienced a learning curve disadvantage when adopting social media.

Although Facebook was groundbreaking to communication strategy, the world was interacting within Web 2.0 and websites were a common form of communication. The yes/no revolved around whether or not the nonprofit started a social account before 2004. This created a variable that could then test the age of the nonprofit.

Step II: Statistical Approach & Research Questions

RQ1: To what extent are religious nonprofits establishing their online and social media presence? To evaluate the extent of which religious nonprofits established their online and social media platforms presence and to determine which of social media platforms is the most active, the researcher performed two one-way ANOVAs. The one-way ANOVA compared the means between multiple groups and determined whether any of those means were significantly different from each other (Laerd, 2020). For the first ANOVA, the researcher compared the total number of social media platforms to the type of the nonprofit.

The first ANOVA addressed online presence in terms of platform use. The second ANOVA looked at the total amount of published social media content and nonprofit type. This was run to determine online presence in terms of nonprofit posting activity (content).

The third ANOVA took this a step further in regard to content. Instead of looking at all published social media content, the researcher ran an ANOVA with the posts published on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube during the month of January 2021. Data for this variable was gathered during the week of March 3, 2021. This data served as the dependent variable, while the independent variable was categorized by the nonprofit type.

RQ2: Is there a relationship between levels of interactivity and the number of followers? To evaluate the extent of the levels of interactivity and type of social media, the researcher performed a Pearson Correlation. The correlation matrix allowed the researcher to observe which pairs had a significant relationship. If any pairs are significant, the matrix indicates the strength of that relationship.

The web has afforded an opportunity for interactive communication between media and their audiences (Greer & Ferguson, 2010). In this study, interactivity was defined as the range of responses an audience user has to interact with a social media post, whether that be text, photo, or video. The researcher did not consider specific types of content of messaging when interactivity was defined. The two-way (dialogic) feedback loop discussed in Chapter 2 is pertinent especially when considering that the structure and operation of social networks is built on information sharing (Greer & Ferguson, 2010).

For the RQ2 analysis, the researcher studied the correlation between the interactivity across the four social media platforms (dependent variable), and the total amount of followers on social media. The four platforms interactivity that were measured on were Facebook ($M = 2865$, $SD = 10074$), Instagram ($M = 7482$, $SD = 19931$), Twitter ($M = 663$, $SD = 1789$), and YouTube ($M = 21086$, $SD = 81895$).

RQ3: What is the relationship between an organization having online donation links and the revenue of the organization? To evaluate this relationship, the researcher performed an independent t -test. The researcher looked at the online donation software used on the nonprofit's websites based on nonprofit type and revenue.

Step III: Running Statistical Tests in Jamovi

To test the hypotheses and research questions, the researcher used the statistical program Jamovi. Jamovi is a free and open statistical software that aims to simplify two aspects of using R (Muenchen, 2018). Jamovi is open to the public and allowed for the development and analyses of a variety of statistical tests (Jamovi, 2021b). It offers a point-and-click graphical user interface (GUI) (Jamovi, 2021a). The researcher used Jamovi to organize the data to run t -tests, descriptives, ANOVAs, Pearson Correlations, and frequencies.

Chapter 4

Results

The first hypothesis of this study proposed that the extent of digital innovation will vary based on the organization's size: organizations that are larger (have a higher amount of revenue) will have a higher level of digital innovation as seen in the nonprofit's total social media number of posts. This hypothesis was tested by comparing each nonprofit's total number of social media posts against the nonprofits' revenue. Pearson's r showed there were no statistically significant relationships between the number of posts and the revenue of the organizations. Given this, the findings suggest there was no evidence that a nonprofit with more revenue would be more active on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and/or YouTube.

The second hypothesis considered the extent of adoption of social media platforms based on when the organization was founded. The second hypothesis proposed that organizations founded earlier would have wider social media presence. This second hypothesis was tested by comparing each nonprofit's total number of social media accounts against two groups: nonprofits that were founded prior to 2004 ($n=28$), and 2004 and following years ($n=56$). Fourteen nonprofits' founded year could not be located and so these nonprofits were marked as missing data in Jamovi.

A t -test of nonprofits founded before 2004 ($M = 2.54$, $SD = 0.48$) versus nonprofits founded during 2004 and after ($M = 1.88$, $SD = 0.474$) was significant ($t = 2.01$, $df = 82$, $p = 0.048$). The results revealed that there were differences between age of organization and the total social media platforms. Since the findings revealed a larger use of social media by the organizations founded post 2003, the data supported the null hypothesis. As a result, the second hypothesis failed to be supported.

The first research question considered whether religious nonprofits were establishing their online and social media presence and if the nonprofit's NTEE type made a difference in the implementation of using social media. An one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test ($F_{0.36} = 8.78, p = 0.78$) showed no significant differences between the number of social media platforms used and four types of nonprofit organizations used in this study: Religious Media Comm Orgs (2.10, $n = 61$), Religious Radio (2.37, $n = 19$), Religious Film and Video (1.88, $n = 8$), and Religious Printing and Publishing (1.80, $n = 10$). Due to test's insignificance, there were no differences between the type of nonprofit and total social media used.

Another one-way ANOVA was used to observe if the nonprofit's NTEE type made a difference in regard to number of social media overall content. The ANOVA resulted in no significant differences among the four types of organizations. A third ANOVA considered the content total of January's 2021 posts. The ANOVA also resulted in no significant differences among the four types of organizations. The limited data only applied two of the ANOVA tests.

The second research question examined the relationship between the levels of interactivity and number of followers across each social media platform via a Pearson's r . Interactivity was defined as the range of responses an audience used to interact with a social media post. Interactivity was measured for all posts published in January 2021.

RQ2 was tested by comparing each nonprofit's interactivity score and number of followers for Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. Since the p value was significantly higher than .05 ($p = 0.78$), the results are not statistically significant. The results showed that there was no relationship between the nonprofit's interactivity and level of followers.

The third research question looked at the differences between the existence of online donation links and the organization's revenue. The researcher ran a Welch's t -test, which showed

there is a statistically significant difference (equal variances not assumed) in the revenue of organizations that have an online donation link and organizations that do not have an online donation link ($t = -2.15$, $df = 41.60$, $p = .04$). Organizations that have an online donation link ($n = 42$, $M = 1.19e+6$, $SD = 3.20e+6$) have higher revenue than organizations that do not have an online donation link ($n = 14$, $M = 140041$, $SD = 153372$). The analysis revealed there is a significant difference in revenue between organizations that have an online donation link and organizations that do not have an online link.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This research can be expanded locally as well as globally. For this thesis, the researcher considered the use, diffusion, and interactivity of social media and online donation software within religious, media-related nonprofits located in the United States. The method and objectives for this thesis were based on previous research, and Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations theory (DIT), in addition to the literature surrounding religious nonprofits that proved to be nearly nonexistent for the nonprofits' that this study examined.

These influences guided the thesis structure and, in turn, provided a solid backdrop and point of comparison to guide the discussion and highlight relevant findings. In this chapter, a brief overview of significant findings was noted and compared with previous research. Prospective researchers in the communication, nonprofit, and business fields can apply the results and findings of this thesis study to discussion and future work.

A number of observations surfaced in this study that are pertinent for the social media industry in general and nonprofit sector and field of philanthropy in particular. These observations included the current state of religious media nonprofit's use of an array of tools to connect with their audiences. These tools included social media, websites, and online donation software. Second, the researcher noted that the activity of the nonprofit's audiences on social media varied and the platform that received the highest follower-to-interactivity score was YouTube. Third, social media is a powerful tool for audience connectivity and fundraising despite the organization size. It is also important to note the medium of video and the role it plays in content creation and nonprofit promotion. Finally, nonprofit e-philanthropy has reached

the late majority stage and the type of online donation software calls for different levels of interactivity and communication strategies.

The study findings give social media managers and nonprofit founders a guideline to use the potential of social media and online donation software to the fullest. Through the information presented in this section, the researcher demonstrated that social media managers can delegate the work of creating content and using their current platforms before any change in marketing/online presence strategy. These findings specifically showed that the more often the nonprofit posts on their social media platforms, the greater opportunity for interactivity.

Nonprofit Online and Social Media Presence

This study sought to fill the gap of literature and provide statistical insight and a status update for a niche field: religious, media-related nonprofits. In the process of determining online and social media presence, the researcher observed the use of websites, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. The researcher also observed activity in terms of nonprofit posting and audience interactivity on the social media platforms. Nonprofit activity in regard to online donation software was also analyzed and addressed in the statistical tests run.

The researcher's first observation pertained to the religious media use of an array of online tools to connect with their audiences, including social media, websites, and online donation software. When defining the sample pool, the research highlighted the ranges of the nonprofit's presence and activity. It established the overall online presence which was identified as website existence (68%) and online donation software use (82%) that the religious, media-related nonprofits had on a website level. The data also highlighted a 32% inactive rate among the initial sample pool (N=144). In terms of social media use, 80% of the nonprofits have

adopted at least one of the following platforms: Facebook (79%), Instagram (38%), Twitter (49%), and YouTube (44%).

The next finding was in regard to nonprofit content type and content creation when the researcher looked for a difference between the number of posts and revenue. These findings aligned with past studies and logic itself since YouTube requires video. Video, by the definition established in Chapter 1, is a much more expensive and time-consuming asset to create.

Compared to the assets needed to create video (time, talent, and financial resources), posting static visual and/or text content on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram requires less time and assets. H1 found that extent of digital innovation did not differ in as seen in the number of posts. By considering the additional investment video requires, this finding can contribute to further discussion since video is becoming an increasingly popular medium to communicate with regardless of the social media platform used.

Up until this point, the findings addressed nonprofit activity in regard to social media technologies. Equally important is the topic of nonprofit online donation software use. Prior to Chapter 4, the researcher noted the overall use of online giving technologies and listed the number of nonprofits that used each type of digital fundraising or the lack thereof (Table 1).

When the researcher reviewed the attributes of RQ3, the researcher found that 82% of the nonprofits used online donation software on their websites (n=81), while 18% did not have any call to action about online donating or any software to allow access to this function. This high rate of adoption and diffusion of online donation technologies (82%) suggested that it passed all levels of the innovation-decision process. These levels include innovators, early adopters, early majority, and late majority. With 18 years of use, the majority of nonprofits have implemented the software. If a nonprofit, that is not currently using online donation software decided to adopt

a form of online fundraising, it would be considered a part of what Rogers (2003) called the “Late Majority.” This is due to the fact that online donation software has experienced a successful adopting and integration by the majority of the sampled nonprofits.

Previous Research

The unique value this thesis provided was the comparison of nonprofit use and activity and audience interactivity across Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. Previous research has dedicated its focus to mainly one of these platforms with an occasional second platform of consideration. A specific topic was selected after a platform was chosen. For instance, Facebook interactivity was studied to highlight the most successful message types while Instagram structure connected with stakeholder communication (Huang et al., 2019; Waters & Saxton, 2014). Previous research addressed nonprofits at large, while this thesis specifically analyzed religious, media-related nonprofits.

Interactivity

An emerging body of literature explored how nonprofits use social media to communicate and engage with stakeholders in terms of interactivity on a single platform (Dong & Rim, 2019; Lovejoy et al., 2012). The interactivity addressed mainly involved and analyzed Facebook metrics and interaction with a focus on measuring the content and structure (Bhati & McDonnell, 2019; Lo & Waters, 2012; Waters & Saxton, 2014). The researcher noted that nonprofit audience interactivity had not recently been analyzed and, when it was, only one platform was considered.

This thesis’ approach widened the scope of the measurement of interactivity from one or two platform(s) to four. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube were all considered in this thesis. The interactivity score provided some key highlights such as a high interactivity level

across the platforms which indicates even growth among the platform that is fueled by multimedia content posting. The interactivity findings also suggested the need for further research that will be expanded upon below.

Frequency of Posts

This thesis put a heavy emphasis on observing the frequency and quantity of nonprofit posts. Past research has monitored the frequency of posts as a necessary means of gathering data (Lovejoy et al., 2012; Waters & Jamal, 2011). Other past research studies have taken a quantitative approach to understand the nonprofit posting frequency (Nah & Saxton, 2012; Sun & Asencio, 2018). This approach looked at the frequency of posting on Twitter and whether the nonprofit had dedicated staff for their social media postings. The study then compared the consistency of their data with prior empirical evidence on social media, such as the importance of frequent posting and dedicated funding as well as the barriers to social media use in nonprofits (Sun & Asencio, 2018).

This thesis study did not look at the posting mechanisms (i.e., staff and software) behind the postings. Rather, this study took a quantitative approach in understanding the level of activity religious, media-related nonprofits are putting forth in regard to posting. This provided the researcher a snapshot of current nonprofit use, which could add to the discussion in which this activity can be compared to 21st century social media expectations.

Follower Loyalty

Follower loyalty and reach were also areas of focus within previous nonprofit studies in regard to stakeholder growth (Benchmarks, 2020a; Majedah, 2017). This was mainly studied by looking at Twitter where the follower-followee networks revealed that nonprofit Twitter audiences maintained strong loyalty to the nonprofit (Fu, 2019). This thesis took follower loyalty

and relationships to a different level and analyzed how active the followers were during January 2021 (RQ2). This thesis did not look at the motivation (i.e., type of messages vs. content) that fueled audience interactivity but measured the quantity of the interactivity. Further research in this area would be beneficial to better understand that aspect of interactivity in religious, media-related nonprofits.

Messaging

Previous studies took into account the types of content and verbiage used in their nonprofit social media posts (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Sun & Asencio, 2018). Jones' (2011) Facebook studies ran tests and coded based on content type (i.e., mobilizational messages, dialogic messages), while Auger's (2013) and Ciszek's (2013) study looked for direct appeals for involvement on YouTube. These research studies are more than 10-years old, but their methodology did shape the reasoning behind their findings. Given the timeframe of this thesis, the researcher did not apply or adapt the coding for content type or certain messaging. In this case, to code for message content, the researcher would have looked for call-to-actions regarding fundraising or asking for involvement.

Diffusion of Innovations in Previous Research Studies

Since the emergence of social media in the early 2000s, studies have used Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations to explain the adoption of social media in the following fields: individual, interpersonal, corporate, and nonprofit. Waters' (2010) conducted a qualitative study of 39 nonprofit leaders and explored how nonprofits are using the potential of the social media technologies to carry out their programs and services. That study used Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations theory as a framework to structure the researcher's thematic analysis. The study

revealed that nonprofits are slowly embracing the possibilities offered by the new social interaction technologies (Waters, 2010).

This slow embracement was studied in journals covering philanthropy, business, and communication. A Florida International University study was done on the topic of the diffusion of social media in nonprofit organizations (Asorwoe, 2017). Asorwoe's dissertation examined the diffusion of Facebook and Twitter among community-based nonprofit organizations affiliated with the United Way of America in Florida. Using Rogers' (2003) DIT and other theories, a regression analysis showed that technological indicators were significant for the adoption of social media, but not for social media use. Other research serves to establish a theoretical framework which helps in explaining the growth of social media and its diffusion from the perspective of Diffusion of Innovations approach (Nah & Saxton, 2012).

This thesis drew from the application of the Diffusion of Innovations theory and the DIT structure of past research. The researcher placed a specific focus on the time construct and innovation as the hypotheses were created. Once the results were gathered, the research then applied DIT to better understand the level of nonprofit adoption and audience activity.

Key Finding Highlights and Diffusion of Innovations Theory

When the thesis' findings were compiled from the test results, the researcher noticed three categories that encompassed the key findings. These categorizes were nonprofit platforms used, nonprofit social media activity, and nonprofit audience interactivity. The term nonprofits referred to religious, media-related nonprofits, which was defined in Chapter 2. These categorizations can be supported and explained by the Diffusion of Innovations theory's perceived characteristic, the degree of innovativeness.

Degree of Innovativeness

Rogers' (2003) studies have determined that the degree of innovativeness was correlated with the size of an organization. As a result, Rogers suggested that larger organizations are more innovative. When the researcher looked for innovation trends at one time in the results, the researcher noted that this did not hold true in this study. The results showed there was no correlation to the overall adoption and use of social media and the organization's size in terms of revenue. There was, however, a positive, significant correlation with YouTube which is beneficial since YouTube required video content, which required resources for content creation.

Further analysis of the *t*-test results revealed that the data does not have a normal distribution which led to use of a Welch *t*-test. Ultimately, the *t*-test for H2 was significant and revealed that there was a difference in social media presence and use between companies founded before 2004 and those founded in 2004 and after. The organizations founded in 2004 and after had a higher amount of social media use.

Nonprofit Age of the Organization

The nonprofits' "year founded" attributes were gathered and observed for any correlation in regard to Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations time construct. Eighty-four of the 98 nonprofits' "year founded" attributes were found online (88%). Of these nonprofits, 28 of them were founded before 2004 (29%). The remaining 56 nonprofits were founded during 2004 and after (57%). By establishing the year founded, the researcher could consider the time frame it took for the nonprofit to adopt social media (i.e., the amount of years since the nonprofit was founded and year they joined Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube).

The time one adopts an innovation represents the point of interaction with the innovation, in this case social media (Rogers, 2003). The data was gathered to measure this time and innovation attribute, but it could not be calculated given the timeframe the researcher had to run

the data. Additionally, each platform's start date of existence varied, which created an issue when comparing multiple platforms. To better understand and group nonprofits' social media adoption, these metrics can be calculated in future research.

Nonprofit Platforms Used

In this thesis study, the social media platforms Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube were used. The researcher found that 79% of the nonprofits used Facebook while 38% used Instagram. Twitter had a 49% use rate, while 44% of nonprofits used YouTube. According to the results, the single most used platform was Facebook. This aligned with previous research studies that showed that Facebook was the leading social media platform due to its early launch and number of users (Auger, 2013; Jones & Waters, 2011; Young, 2016). It also nearly aligned with the results from a study that observed the following social media: Facebook (95%), Instagram (56%), Twitter (64%), and YouTube (30%) (Funraise, 2019). In both studies, Facebook was the leading social media platform followed by Twitter. However, the results found in this thesis demonstrated a higher use of YouTube compared to Instagram.

When the researcher compared the trend of adoption and use of social media and online donation software to Rogers' (2003) diffusion process, the data illustrated that religious, media-related nonprofits fall along the continuum of early majority adopters to late majority. If adoption of either technology occurs now, the nonprofit would be considered to be a laggard since well over 80% of the nonprofits are using both technologies (Rogers, 2003).

Nonprofit Social Media Activity

Innovation adoption occurs at two levels, organizational and individual. The researcher addressed the organizational diffusion in relation to thesis study, but would encourage further study with a qualitative approach to better define DIT's motivations that propelled the diffusion

within the nonprofits. Innovation adoption also occurs at the individual level and it is based on whether or not a person has adopted a given innovation. In this thesis, this individual innovation was viewed as the nonprofit's audience that followed the given nonprofit on the social media platform being examined. It was further analyzed in regard to audience interactivity.

Audience. The culmination of data indicated that nonprofits that have a large number of followers on one channel have a large number of followers on the others. In short, nonprofits that are focused on growing their audience are growing their audiences across all major social media platforms. However, there was no point of comparison in regard to past research to see if the follower data matched or surpassed nonprofit industry norms.

Interactivity. Not only have individuals adopted (i.e., established a profile on) the researched social media platforms, the individuals have demonstrated an active use of the platform. This was monitored by the range of responses an audience user had to interact with a social media post. These types of responses created the interactivity score that was analyzed. In the research question results, a high positive correlation was revealed between Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter interactivity (RQ2).

Comparison of Findings

In light of previous research and DIT, the researcher compared the results and findings from this research study against past work. Two main areas of comparison emerged when organizational diffusion was examining: 1) social media use and activity, and 2) online donation software.

Social Media Use and Activity

As covered above in the "Nonprofits Used Section," the researcher found an 80% adoption and use rate among the nonprofits. Past research has not been conducted on religious,

media-related nonprofits use of social media. As a result, there is no statistical data to compare this finding. However, some studies that have observed other types of nonprofits and conducted tests that suggested social media may play a more important role for smaller organizations than for larger ones (Hou & Lampe , 2015; Young, 2016). In this thesis, there was no statistical significance to support this finding.

Online Donation Software

Past research found that almost 90% of organizations placed a donation button on the organization's website (Young, 2016). The study found that these organizations treated the donation button as a form of functionality on the website and did not make further actions aimed at deepening the relationship with the donor. The donation button simply allowed the user to quickly make payments to it. The study noted that this approach had a negative impact since the amount of the donation was small (Young, 2016).

The researcher found that 82% of the nonprofits have used online donation software on their websites (n=81), while 18% do not have any call to action about online donating or any software to allow access to this function. The results also revealed that religious media-related nonprofits had a 66% use of online donation software. A breakdown of the online donation software categories revealed that the majority of nonprofits have decided to use online donation that is embedded into the homepage online software. This high rate of adoption and diffusion for online donation technologies (82%) suggested that it has passed all levels of the organizational innovation-decision process.

The thesis findings aligned with past research findings in regard to online donation links found on nonprofit websites. Unlike the previous research, this thesis did not code for messaging

of motivation of the online donation software. Rather, the focus on online donation software presence was established to gather a better sense of overall online technologies adoption and use.

Future Research

The religious nonprofit field and digital technology use is a field that has minimal previous research contributions. This thesis contributed to the nonprofit field and specifically looked at the religious, media-related nonprofit sector. This study only scratched the surface of this specific niche field. Given the study results, the researcher would propose a both quantitative and a mixed methods approach for further research.

Quantitative Future Research

The results about the interactivity levels and use of social media platforms were not significant in their findings. Additionally, given the test and data limitations, an issue of needing to survey the organizations' reasoning behind the use of social media functions remains unknown. Further research is needed to determine if interactivity could be contributed to the type of people (i.e., audience) who follow the nonprofit compared to the type of content posted by the nonprofit.

To determine if interactivity is connected to the content posted, the researcher has suggested that future research codes for specific messaging. To better understand the success rate and reach of nonprofit content overall, coding for messaging could be beneficial. For instance, in RQ3 the researcher looked for the use of online donation software. To establish the success rate or implementation of online fundraising on social media posts, the future research could pull the Facebook posts during a certain time frame and code "support," "click here," "give," and "get involved." Additionally, the use of links to fundraising pages could be taken into account.

To determine if interactivity is connected to audience type, future research could widen the sample pool to another branch of nonprofits and use the Google Ad Library to track published advertising on Facebook, Instagram, and Messenger (Google, 2021). This would enable the researcher to gather audience demographics, advertising length, content verbiage, cost, click rate, and use of links.

Future Mixed Methods Research

For a mixed method approach (qualitative and quantitative), the researcher would suggest the creation of a survey to be administered to gauge the respondent's use of online donation software and how they best connect with nonprofit social media content. The following open-ended questions could be considered: How much time has occurred since you last donated online? What type(s) of nonprofit do you normally support? Have you donated to a nonprofit using their website in the last month? Questions that require a Likert scale can also be included. A survey could also be administered to the religious nonprofit leadership to gauge technological barriers to adoption, current social media adoption, and also online donation tool use.

Other Topics for Further Research

In addition to specific qualitative and quantitative research to gain a deeper understanding of the audience use of online donation, nonprofit adoption of social media and fundraising, and interactivity, other topics for further research has surfaced. The researcher first discovered the importance of inactivity. A breakdown of the four online presence levels revealed that 46 of the 144 (32%) nonprofits were inactive and did not have any online presence. NTEE, ProPublica, and IRS has not defined the exact reason of inactivity but suggested that it was due to the nonprofit's retirement. Further research is encouraged to discover the reason behind and impact of the nonprofit's inactivity.

Limitations

This thesis study has provided findings that have contributed to filling the gap in a niche field: religious, media-related nonprofits. The limitations that surrounded this study centered around the data sample pool. Following a specific criterion outlined in Chapter 3, the sample pool was pulled from ProPublica's search query and sorted by level of activity. The data sample pool was niche by the nature of the field being studied; however, it is important to note that the sample pool did not pull from even categories. For instance, there were more nonprofits that were categorized as "Religious Media, Comm Orgs" (NPType 1) than those who were categorized by the NTEE as "Religious Film, Video" (NPType3). When gathering and reviewing the results and findings of the data, the researcher was cognizant of the implications of the sample pool. The researcher was also cognizant that the analysis of this niche group has provided an accurate representation of the social media use, practices, and activity of religious media-related nonprofits.

Conclusions

In this thesis quantitative study, the researcher analyzed religious, media-related nonprofits for social media and online donation software use and nonprofit audience interactivity on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. The researcher analyzed 98 nonprofits from ProPublica that met the criterion and gathered data based on social media and online donation use. All 3,406 of the nonprofits' January 2021 posts and their interactivity were also gathered during the week of March 1, 2021 to better understand how audiences react and engage with content. With this data, the researcher ran ANOVAs, *t*-tests, and Person Correlations to address the hypotheses and research questions.

Not all tests were statistically significant, however; the data gathered allowed for additional findings and use of online donation tools and social media use within religious nonprofits. With over 80% using Facebook and online donation tools, the researcher found that social media and online donation software are mainstream in the religious nonprofit field. Per Roger's (2003) IDT, the nonprofits that adopt social media or online donation tools would be considered Laggards.

Of the platforms studied, Facebook (81%) served as the leading platform nonprofits used to communicate online. This was followed by Twitter (49%), YouTube (44%) and Instagram (38%), but all serve as an important tool to promote interactivity and engagement within their online audiences. The nonprofits that received the most interactivity and engagement used two or more platforms. Of those platforms, YouTube had the highest follower-to-interactivity score, which meant that it received the most interactivity based on number of followers.

While this study provided a deeper understanding of nonprofit online donation tools and social media adoption use and audience interactivity, the religious nonprofit field is rich for future research. Further research that seeks to highlight the motivations and distinguish communication strategies to best communicate to online audiences of Millennials and Baby Boomers can use this study's findings to structure their research approach and contribute to fill the literature gap found in this niche field. In the time being, this study serves as a foundation to foster communication about religious, media-related nonprofits and has highlighted important areas for consideration by the wider strategic communication and nonprofit community that encourages further discussion and research.

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Appendix A

Nonprofit ID	Total Amount of Social Accounts
1	3
3	4
4	4
5	2
6	0
7	3
8	0
9	2
10	0
11	4
13	1
14	0
16	4
18	4
19	1
20	2
21	2
22	4
24	2
27	3
30	0
32	4
33	1
34	0
38	1
40	3
41	1
42	0
43	2
45	1
46	0
47	1
48	2
50	0
51	1

53	1
54	3
55	4
56	1
57	1
59	4
60	3
61	0
62	1
64	3
66	3
68	1
69	3
70	2
71	3
72	2
73	3
74	3
75	0
76	1
77	1
78	0
81	2
82	2
83	2
84	4
85	3
86	1
88	3
89	3
91	3
92	2
93	4
96	1
97	3
98	4
101	1
102	4
103	4

104	4
105	3
106	4
107	3
109	4
111	2
112	2
113	4
114	2
116	4
119	4
121	1
124	2
125	0
126	0
127	0
128	4
130	0
134	2
137	3
139	2
140	4
141	0
144	1