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RUNNING HEAD: #PawnderAdoption: Increasing Rates Among Shelters

#PawnderAdoption

Creating a Public Relations Campaign to Increase Adoption Rates Among Shelters in the United States

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at Syracuse University

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Honors Capstone Project in Public Relations

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Abstract

Pet overpopulation has been a national issue for years. With thousands of unwanted stray cats and dogs found on the streets annually, local shelters are doing their best to rehabilitate and rehome animals. However, funds and resources are limited, and communication efforts are poor. Animal shelters need to begin to focus on public relations efforts in order to boost identity within their local communities. The purpose of this research was to discover what inherently goes into developing a comprehensive, successful public relations campaign. This study specifically focused on the following research questions (a) what makes a public relations campaign successful? (b) how do public relations efforts change and/or affect nonprofit organizations? and (c) how can animal shelters better utilize public relations to promote their mission? This was accomplished through two methods. First, research of previous successful nonprofit campaigns along with an analysis of the current state of the adoption process (related to public relations efforts) in animal shelters across the United States was conducted. Second, the implementation of an integrated app, which will enable easier accessibility to the adoption process directly to the consumer, is to be created. The app is called PAWNDER, and is inspired by the dating app, Tinder, in format. Consumers are matched with adoptable animals based off of preferences inputted into the app. The app's goal is to make the process easier and provide more accessibility to animals in need.

Keywords: nonprofit public relations, ASPCA, animal adoption, brandraising, audience centric communication

Executive Summary

Abused, homeless or abandoned animals, specifically dogs and cats, continue to be a societal challenge in the United States for animal shelters. In addition to limited funds and resources allocated to animal nonprofit organizations, communication efforts are limited and, though they might be the best efforts, are ultimately disappointing in relation to success rates in shelters.

A trend seen in the United States is the growing issue of pet overpopulation. Roughly half of the animals who enter shelters are euthanized because of simple math: there are too many animals and not enough adoptive homes (PETA, 2019). In many cases, homeless animals often live a sad, lonely life out in the streets trying to survive on their own.

The solution is to adopt animals only from shelters and have them spayed or neutered to prevent the overpopulation that condemns millions of animals a year to death in the United States (ISAR, 2019). To ensure that this goal can be achieved, shelters need to develop a comprehensive communication effort to ensure that the needs of the shelters are being actively communicated to the consumer.

The purpose of this study was to analyze the rate of successful adoptions in correlation to campaigns hosted by multiple shelters across the United States. This study specifically focused on the following research questions (a) what makes a public relations campaign successful? (b) how do public relations efforts change and/or affect non-profit organizations? and (c) how can animal shelters better utilize public relations to promote their mission?

These questions will be addressed using information and background facts gathered from the literature review as well as the method of social media analysis.

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Finally, thank you to my cat, Bobby, for showing me what an impact animal can make on people's lives.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

Public relations is a management function that classically focuses on long-term patterns of interaction between an organization and its various publics (Harrison, 2011). In contemporary understanding and application, public relations seeks to enhance these relationships, thus generating mutual understanding, goodwill and support. Through an international and grassroots project culminating in a vote by members, the standard definition developed by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) states: “Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics” (Public Relations Society of America). PRSA explains that this definition emphasizes the key characteristics of public relations as a process of communication, strategic in nature, with a focus on mutually beneficial relationships” (PRSA 2019).

In order for public relations functions to be successful, focused and effective, a system is needed. This system is referred to as a public relations campaign and involves a detailed plan. Kim Harrison, author of *Strategic Public Relations—A Practical Guide to Success*, notes that a campaign is “a planned set of communication activities, each with a specific defined purpose, continued over a set period of time and intended to meet communication goals and objectives relating to a nominated issue: for example, a campaign to increase industrial safety” (Harrison, 2011). These integrated public relations systems provide opportunities for organizations, such as nonprofit organizations, to communicate to audiences in effective ways to gain support. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) is a prime example of a nonprofit that consistently works on its public relations efforts in order to raise awareness and gain support. Since 1866, the ASPCA has been working to promote kindness to animals in

different regional branches all across the globe. Yet, before 2005, the ASPCA had no professional public relations staff, primarily relying on advertising and website interaction (KDPaine & Partners, LLC 2008).

By analyzing their communicative efforts, the ASPCA has continued to grow in its approaches of how to best correspond with its publics. By utilizing public relations efforts through systematic organization and planning, the ASPCA has the opportunity to explore a new realm of communicative efforts that could completely change (in a positive way) how they get their goals across to the public.

Previous Research

In 2006, the ASPCA partnered with KDPaine & Partners to systematically measure and evaluate its communication efforts and the resulting effects on their brand. The ASPCA wanted to ensure that their brand represented a vision “of a nation of humane communities in which all animals are treated with respect and kindness” (KDPaine & Partners, LLC 2008). To accomplish this, the companies designed a strategic plan that included traditional print, broadcast and web-based media outreach.

The ASPCA’s communication was aimed at the 71.1 million pet owning households in America as well as the core membership of nearly one million pet parents across the United States (KDPaine & Partners, LLC 2008). Their secondary audiences included employees of shelters, breeders, veterinarians, and pet-related retailers.

The communications data and other organizational information demonstrated the value in building and maintaining the organization's reputation and relationships with its publics through social media, positively impacting web traffic, and most importantly, communicating vital information about pet safety, anti-cruelty and the social and legislative work need to realize its

vision to the public via mass media and social media channels. Key findings of this research includes the following three areas:

- “A strong relationship between desirable discussion in the consumer-generated space and unique monthly visitors. This suggested that discussion in new media channels like blogs could be a predictor of online interest that brings active, quality visitors to ASPCA.org” (KDPaine & Partners, LLC 2008).
- “A relationship between desirable traditional media exposure and consumer-generated discussion, which supported the role of traditional media relations in the new media environment and in regard to web-based objectives” (KDPaine & Partners, LLC 2008)
- “The role of issue visibility in web traffic. When examining the relationships between traditional media agendas and web traffic, it was the quantity of discussion, and less so the specific issues involved, that drove traffic. The notable exception, coverage of animal and pet welfare issues had a significant, though slightly weak, correlation with unique monthly visitors to ASPCA.org” (KDPaine & Partners, LLC 2008).

Since the ASPCA was functioning without a cost-effective budget, this research proved that an integrated approach within the digital age has become important. Influence between social and traditional media on this evaluative study provides evidence that public relations plays a key role in driving web traffic in the nonprofit sector through the use of social media. As the web becomes a primary source of information and a large place of interaction among consumers, a nonprofit organization should utilize this to its benefit. “This research is critical to promoting the understanding of public relations as a relationship management function that is independent of medium” (KDPaine & Partners, LLC 2008).

Statement of Problem

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Nonprofit organizations face an extremely difficult challenge when approaching and understanding public relations strategy, especially in which the issue is a relative matter depending on different individual perceptions. Due to the simple fact that individual preferences can vary depending on the mission of the nonprofit, the ultimate challenge rests within how to effectively reach the target audience and market in a way that changes their long-term perceptions of the nonprofit organization for the better. Nonprofit organizations are constantly addressed with the issue of the most effective communication strategies to successfully brand, communicate and achieve their nonprofit goals.

Purpose of the Study

“#PawnderAdoption” is a national campaign with the goal to raise awareness about the benefits of adopting rescue pets from shelters, and also works to provide simpler access to foreseeable adoptees, thus making the adoption process easier for all involved.

Thesis Proposal Overview

For my capstone, I will be evaluating and proposing a strategic public relations campaign to promote and increase the adoptions of shelter animals across the United States. To accomplish this, I will begin by researching what is entailed in developing a successful public relations campaign. Through secondary research I will systematically analyze both successful and unsuccessful public relations campaigns to evaluate specific elements. Additionally, I will begin to curate an ideal proposal that should effectively increase adoptions across the United States. This will include a Problem and Opportunity Statement, a Situation Analysis, SWOT Analysis, Objectives, Strategies and Tactics. Finally, my research concludes by identifying ideal implementation strategies, specifically focusing on the full development of an app. The app will help to connect consumers with potential adoptable animals based off of inputted preferences.

This will help to simplify the process of adoption in shelters across the United States and put the power into the hands of the consumer, rather than simply relying on individual shelters and their public relations efforts. This app will be the main implementation tactic that will focus on increasing overall adoptions across the United States.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Traditionally, for-profit entities have integrated marketing and communications into their brand strategy more successfully and effectively than nonprofit organizations (Pope, 2009). Nonprofits that have recently emerged into the sector claim it is much harder than their for-profit counterparts to build in communications budgets, staff and infrastructure (Durham, 2010).

In 2008, Big Duck conducted an online survey of nonprofits to identify the barriers that make it difficult for them to communicate with their publics and highlighted three resource shortages as the greatest communications obstacles that nonprofits experience:

- 27.8% stated not having the time to develop or implement a proper communication strategy
- 21.7% stated not having the budget to implement what they want to do
- 9.1% stated not having communications expertise within the organization

(Durham, 2010)

Nonprofits' lack of time, money and expertise for communications are expected barriers to have. Under these basic barriers, it was found that nonprofit organizations also have a general lack of understanding of the basic principles of effective communications (Durham, 2010) .

The tools of public relations, such as social media, media relations, partnerships, and integrated campaigns, can be used for good by organizations and advocates for social justice, education, minority rights and environmental safety. Nonprofit organizations such as charities, schools, and religious groups have been able to share their expertise and promote their services through successful public relations campaigns because they have effectively reached their target audience. For example, Water is Life launched a social media campaign called

#FirstWorldProblems. This hashtag was a play off of the highly overused #firstworldproblems used mainly by those with privilege. The campaign featured a video of people from Haiti reading the #FirstWorldProblems tweet to highlight the ridiculousness these “problems” were in comparison to their own. The Haitians sympathized with the first world problems that people were tweeting about. The result was that people on Twitter started tweeting about Water is Life’s message of donating clean water to the Third World, Water is Life’s initial message. (Cassandro, 2016). This was a powerful campaign because Water is Life essentially mocked the western way of life. Taking a popular aspect of social media (such as utilizing a trending hashtag) and doing something unique with it was an effective way that the nonprofit employed public relations tools to send a message.

Many nonprofit organizations manage communications efforts with only short-term goals in mind. Though it is typical for nonprofit organizations to spend time planning where they would like their programs and services to be in the future, there is rarely consideration of how donors, clients, policymakers and the public perceive them in the longer term. Research by Concord Leadership Group of over 1000 nonprofits showed that “over half didn’t have a strategic plan” (Keela, 2016). Strategic plans allow for a number of long-term goals *and* short-term goals. Planning only for the short-term instead of budgeting and building communications for the long term tends to create a culture of working reactively rather than proactively - and this is where nonprofit communications fail.

Non-profit Communication Initiative Approaches (Short Term Initiatives vs. Long Term Initiatives)

The Short-Term Approach	The Long-Term Approach
No budget for communications.	Budgets annually for ongoing communications.

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<p>Postpones overhauling important communications such as branding, Websites, etc., until the situation becomes a crisis. Only then, the organization often makes compromises in the development due to limited budget or time to complete it.</p>	<p>Anticipates big expenses in advance, such as branding, Websites, etc., and seeks funding for them proactively.</p>
<p>Has no formal or written guidelines for maintaining identity and little clarity about who is responsible. Typically, there are no defined key messages.</p>	<p>Has developed a clear visual identity and a messaging platform; these elements are institutionalized in a style guide, staff manual or other documents in order for them to remain on-brand, and thus, recognizable as the organization.</p>
<p>Has developed its visual identity and messaging informally and subjectively.</p>	<p>Has developed its visual identity and messaging platform strategically, with a clear link to the organization's vision and mission. In older nonprofit organizations, any shifts in the brand occur after strategic planning, to make sure brand and plans are linked.</p>
<p>Dives into using new communication tools, such as social media, or big projects without connecting these projects to other internal initiatives strategically. As a result, projects short-circuit or must be overhauled sooner than expected.</p>	<p>Doesn't undertake a new communications project until it's clear who the audience is, what the project will require of the staff, and what the project's purpose is.</p>

By taking a long-term approach to strategic planning, companies maintain a big picture perspective that helps them make informed decisions while managing daily communications.

Getting attention is harder than ever. With more ways to communicate and a growth of organizations using them, it's important to have a strategy that will help leverage investment in communications as fully as possible. Most organizations communicate on their own terms, not their audience's. Shifting toward an audience-centric point of view can be transformative.

Institutional challenges such as politics, limited staff expertise, small or nonexistent budgets and a tendency to work reactively often lead to unintentional branding and last minute materials.

These communications are usually far from optimal and get redone over time, using up

additional resources. “Lack of long-term planning can lead to overspending before sustainable revenue streams can be developed to support the cost structure. Without a contingency plan to deal with revenue reductions, an unexpected reduction in grant funding or other loss of revenue can be fatal for an organization” (Guevara, 2018). In an ideal world, nonprofits would budget and staff appropriately for communications from the beginning.

Strategic communication is “the intentional communication undertaken by a business or nonprofit organization, sometimes by a less-structured group. It has a purpose and a plan, in which alternatives are considered and decisions are justified” (Smith, 2017). This type of communication relies on research and its eventual evaluation in order to understand and learn from its impact.

A campaign “is a systematic set of public relations activities, each with a specific and finite purpose, sustained over a length of time and dealing with objectives associated with a particular issue” (Smith, 2017). Most public relations campaigns follow a certain process. *Strategic Planning for Public Relations* proposes a model that includes four separate phases of action, with nine steps of strategic public relations for a successful campaign.

Phase One: FORMATIVE RESEARCH

1. Analyzing the Situation
2. Analyzing the Organization
3. Analyzing the Publics

Research is essential before any planning of a campaign for “the planner draws on existing information available to the organization and, at the same time, creates a research program for gaining additional information needed to drive the decisions that will come later in the planning process” (Smith, 2017).

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Analyzing the situation is crucial because this allows the campaign planning to take into account the nature of the opportunity or obstacle that needs to be addressed, and teaches what researchers have discovered about the issue or opportunity in previous case studies. Past research not only saves time in understanding, but also provides a guide on how to best approach the campaign.

Analyzing the organization involved a look at three aspects of the organization:

1. Internal Environment (Mission, Performance, Resources)
2. Public Perception (Reputation)
3. External Environment (Competitors, Opponents, Supporters)

Analyzing the organization allows for a clear understanding of the goals of the client. The campaign remains true to the needs of the organization, understands the current perception of the organization, in order to keep it the same or change it with the campaign, and perceives the potential factors that could impact the success of the campaign.

Analyzing the publics identifies the target audiences that the organization wants to interact with. This identification narrows down the communication strategy to the specific need of that target audience in order to best transfer information about the organization or campaign.

Phase Two: **STRATEGY**

1. Establishing Goals and Objectives
2. Formulating Action and Response Strategies
3. Developing the Message Strategy

The second phase, strategy, makes the decisions “dealing with the expected impact of the communication, as well as the nature of the communication itself” (Smith, 2017).

The first step in the strategic phase is to establish goals and objectives for the organization and its future campaign or message. This helps to develop clear, specific, and most importantly,

measurable objectives that recognize the organization's intended impact on the awareness, acceptance and action of each target audience member.

Formulating action and response strategies consider what the organization might do in various situations that may come of the campaign or daily communication. This includes public relations initiatives and potential responses to the goals and objectives of the campaign or organization.

Developing the message strategy deals with "the various decisions about the message, such as the person or entity who will present the message to the key publics, the content of the message, its tone and style, verbal and nonverbal cues, and related issues" (Smith, 2017). The message should be designed in a way that reflects the information gained from the research of the targeted key publics.

Phase Three: TACTICS

1. Selecting Communication Tactics
2. Implementing the Strategic Plan

Various communication tools are considered during the third phase of strategic communication which include tactics that are visible elements of the communication plan such as press releases, social media posts, brochures or events. Though all communication tools can technically be used by every organization, not every tool is necessarily appropriate for the goal and target audience.

Selecting these communication tactics are decided by considering four different categories:

1. face-to-face communication and opportunities for personal involvement
2. organization-developed media
3. news media
4. advertising and promotional media

Implementing the strategic plan is when the physical elements are instituted and created for the strategic communication plan. Examples of this include budgets, schedules, and other tools to help implement the plan.

Phase Four: **EVALUATIVE RESEARCH**

1. Evaluating the Strategic Plan

The final phase includes evaluation and assessment. Measurement allows the organization to determine the degree to which the objectives have been successfully met, and consequently modifies or continues the communication efforts.

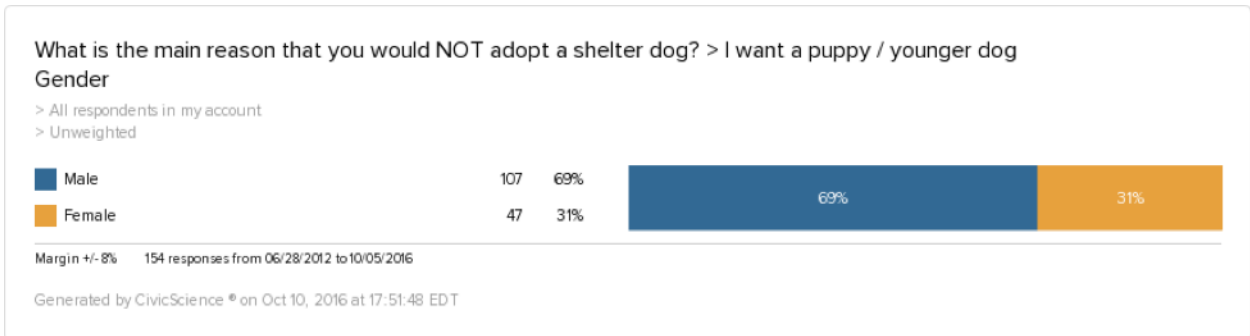
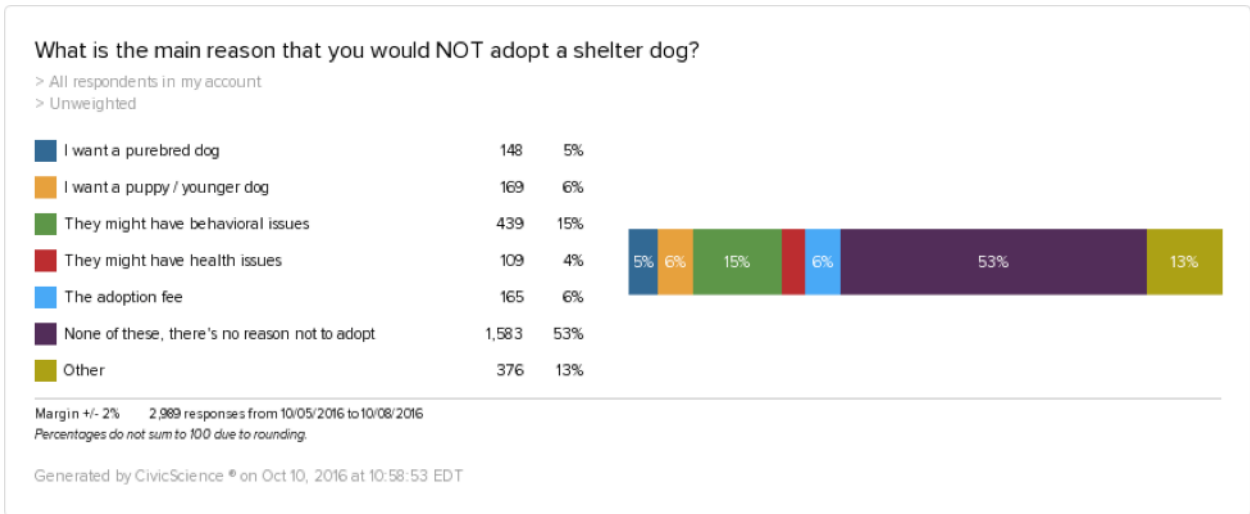
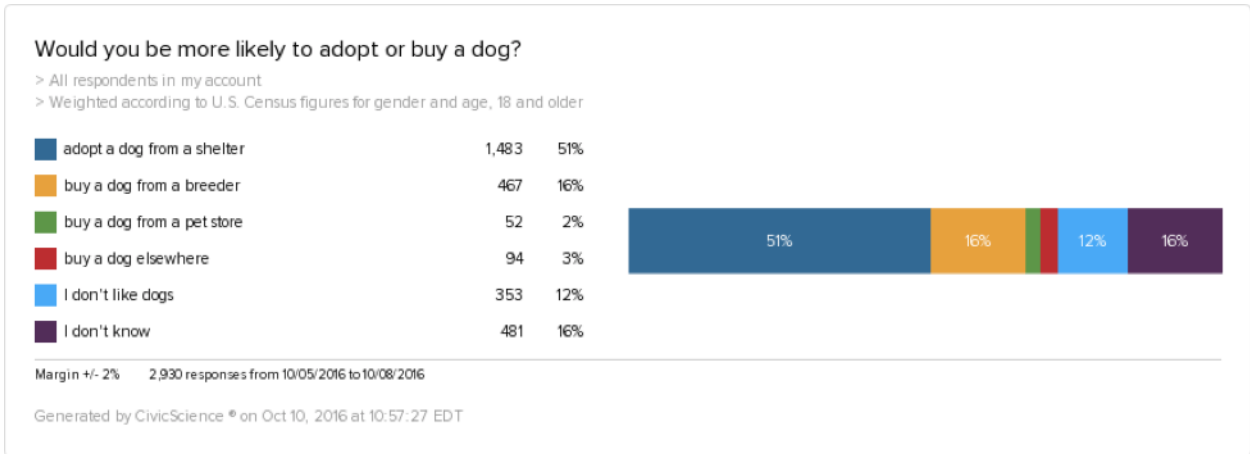
The ASPCA National Outreach department estimates that more than 5,000 animal shelters exist in the United States. However, there is no sure understanding of this fact since there is no federal system to define or regulate shelters. Humane societies and SPCAs are not affiliated with the national ASPCA or the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). Although some states regulate animal shelters, the guidelines for animal care may be rudimentary at best.

Despite adoption becoming more popular, there is still much work to be done. There are many concerns, hesitations, and doubts that lead people away from animal shelters. According to a research study conducted by Civic Science, the reasons why many people prefer to shop at a pet shop over adopting varies (Star, 2017):

- Shelter dogs might have behavioral issues
- Dog shelters don't have puppies
 - There is a common misconception that shelter animals are older, but there are still many puppies that enter shelters each year.
- Dog shelters have high adoption fees

- This fee usually rests around a few hundred dollars and covers certain medical procedures such as spaying/neutering and microchipping.

- There are no purebred dogs in dog shelters
- Shelter dogs might have health issues



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A survey conducted by Best Friends Animal Society identified a disconnect in how Americans approach pet adoption. The survey results found that 46% of respondents ages 18 to 34 were more likely to purchase a pet from a breeder or store rather than consider adoption (Best Friends Animal Society, 2017). In addition, the same percentage believed that shelter animals were less desirable than those obtained from breeders. Nearly 40% of the young adults surveyed thought homeless animals were not necessarily at risk and would remain in a shelter until adoption. In a Best Friends Animal Society Adoptions Barriers Research Survey conducted in 2016, rescues and shelters both rate low on the following processes (Best Friends Animal Society, 2016):

- Too much paperwork
- Lengthy application process
- Strict requirements
- High fees
- No response
- Lack of follow up

Over 3.5 billion mobile phone accounts were active worldwide at the end of 2008. (Durham, 2010). That's more than twice the number of people who had computer-based Internet access at that time. It's estimated that 95% of all Americans had a mobile phone in 2008. (Durham, 2010). Most individuals throughout the world are linked by mobile phones -- talking on them, text messaging, shooting video, taking pictures, using Facebook, Myspace, and more. As of 2009, nonprofit organizations in the United States were just starting to consider how they might use mobile phones for a portion of their communications, whereas many nonprofits in Europe, Africa and beyond had already successfully integrated mobile phones into their communication

strategies. Around the world, nonprofits are now using mobile devices to get out the vote; send public messages at live events; and provide in-time immediate information about safety, the environment, corporate policies and more. Nonprofits have begun to take advantage of the proliferation of mobile, with more than 1 billion people around the globe with tablets, smartphones, and other mobile devices (Gramigna, 2013). “With the move toward open data, many nonprofit organizations are creating mobile applications (apps) to utilize the availability of this information. Apps are developed based on the needs of the nonprofit and should provide the end-user with information and help in some way, perhaps to make a donation or respond to an invitation” (Gramigna, 2013).

Nonprofit organizations have a paramount need to communicate with their internal and external public for sustainability in today's continuously changing environment. They must be in touch with the public's from the start to reach them effectively, but funding issues are a chronic issue for this sector, which is why strategic public relations campaigns can help. Public relations has many tools (when combined with unique touches) that increases trust and faith in an organization, as well as allow nonprofit organizations to reach their publics at a very low cost. Unfortunately, nonprofit organizations cannot simply rely on the power of public relations efforts. In order for the efforts to be successful, careful research, planning and implementation must be established for ultimate success. To make matters more difficult, this must be a process that plans for the long-term success of the nonprofit rather than for the short-term.

With this in mind, this study aims to identify public relations solutions to the crisis of pet adoption and placement in the United States for the long term. Though this research and study is based solely off of the ASPCA as an entity, the tactics and implementations will be aimed to

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expand success and partnerships across all nonprofit organizations with the same end goal:
finding safe homes for animals in need.

Research Questions/Objectives

1. What makes a public relations campaign successful?
2. How do public relations efforts change and/or affect nonprofit organizations?
3. How can animal shelters better utilize public relations to promote their mission?

Chapter 3

Methodology

Methodological Approach

Brandraising

Brandraising is when nonprofits establish vision, mission, values, objectives, audiences, positioning, and personality before creative work occurs ensuring that all communications are reflective of the organization's true reason for existence. There are three levels of brandraising: organizational, identity and experiential. This research will focus on the experiential level of brandraising, to determine specifically how animal shelters can better perform in their communicative efforts.

Nonprofits communicate through five channels: online, in print, in person, on air, and by mobile. These communications define the experiential level because these are the channels through which audiences interact with a nonprofit most often. Many organizations do not have large enough communications budgets to invest in all the channels at the experiential level. Therefore, it is important to leverage the channels and tools that are most audience centric and that offer the biggest impact. The landscape is shifting at this level: social media, text messaging and other new tools that are radically altering the way people communicate. They provide opportunities for organizations to connect with donors, clients, and other audiences in innovative ways.

Experiential Brandraising

The Experiential Level of brandraising defines the ways audiences interact with the organization which can include:

- Online Channels such as the organization's Website, email, blogs and social media presence.

- In-print communications, such as brochures, magazine or news articles, flyers, and reports.
- In-person communications, conducted through programs, meetings, galas and other gatherings.
- On-air communications, such as public service announcements (PSAs) or other ads on TV or radio, videos on YouTube, and coverage by journalists in these medias.
- Mobile communications reach people by cell phone, often by text messaging. This is a powerful and newer channel that many organizations are now using for advocacy and fundraising.

Audience-Centric Communication

Audience-centric communications is when organizations focus on understanding who their audience is and how they will benefit from supporting the organization's work (rather than telling the publics why your organization is so great). For example, previously, there was a study of the ASPCA shelters holding a terrific example of successful audience-centric communicating by asking a simple question:

- *Are dog people and cat people alike, or are cat people just interested in cats, and dog folks in dogs?*

To answer this question, the ASPCA created a test email. The results were unequivocal: cat people respond much more favorable when they receive content exclusively about cats, and vice versa. This clearly shows that audiences want to choose the content they receive based off of their personal interests and goals. If bombarded with other content that does not relate personally to them, it is more likely that the content will be ignored, and the organizations message will be

ineffective. Today, if you register on the ASPCA Website (www.asPCA.org), you will be asked to enter information about your pet(s). The types of communications you receive after that will be determined by this pet information. This change, one part of a new way of communicating that grew out of the ASPCA's strategic plan, helped this nonprofit virtually double its operating income in a few short years.

Audience-centric communications are about communicating on the audience's terms, not on the Organization's terms:

- *Communicate with audiences via each group's preferred media*
- *Use language that describes the benefits of its work to audiences in a way that they find meaningful and personally relevant*
- *Adjust the quantity and type of information it sends to people based on their level of engagement with the organization*

These communications define the experiential level because these are the channels through which audiences experience a nonprofit. Most organizations don't have large enough communications budgets to invest in all the channels at the Experiential Level. Therefore, it is important to leverage the channels and tools that are most audience-centric and that offer the biggest impact. The landscape is shifting at this level: social media, text messaging, and other new tools are radically altering the way people communicate. They provide opportunities for organizations to connect with donors, clients and other audiences in innovative ways.

Communicating with audience-centricity requires us to move from thinking from our own point of view toward thinking from other people's point of view. There are three ways that organizations can begin shifting toward a more audience-centric style of communication:

- Conduct formal or informal research into the target audiences' preferred communications styles and channels. This research should be used to shape the language you use, and the media through which they send messages.
- An organization should develop a communications calendar built around the best times to reach the audience
- An organization should implement software solutions, when possible, that allow the organization to specify the communications preferences of the individuals in the database so the audience can be contacted in the way they prefer.
 - For instance, emailing the people who prefer email and have requested that you stop sending printed materials.

Current Campaigns

Find Your Fido National Campaign

The Find Your Fido national campaign empowers shelters across the country with tools, resources and training to get more dogs adopted during Adopt a Shelter Dog Month. The campaign is designed to grow community engagement, enhance social media savvy and secure placement in traditional media. Key benefits found from the Find Your Fido Campaign of 2018 included:

- National online exposure via the ASPCA's website and media partners
- Exclusive webinars presented by Facebook and The Dodo
- Online tutorials for mastering Instagram and other social platforms
- Customizable digital and print graphics
- Tried-and-true community programs that get shelter dogs in the public eye

In partnership with digital media publisher The Dodo, the ASPCA aims each year during the month of October to expand digital exposure for the 3.3 million dogs (ASPCA, 2019) who enter the country’s shelters each year and help to increase their chances of being adopted.

“Right now, millions of dogs, or ‘Fidos,’ are waiting patiently in shelters across the U.S. for their chance to find the right match. Throughout the month, The Dodo will be helping us spread the word that while adoptions isn’t always a possibility for everyone, there are plenty of ways you can help Fido’s find homes” (ASPCA, 2019).

Animal lovers across the United States can follow Fido’s adventures and help the mission by posting photos on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook with their own rescue pet or a shelter pet in need of a home at the moment, with the hashtag #FindYourFido.



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 **daisyfuentes** • Follow ...

daisyfuentes As many of you know, rescue dogs hold a special place in my heart. In honor of Adopt a Shelter Dog Month, I'm teaming up with the @ASPCA for its #FindYourFido campaign to help find loving families for homeless dogs across the country. Meet my new friend, Moo, a darling 4-year-old female pit bull who is available for adoption at @BaldwinParkCareCenter in L.A. Please help sweet Moo find a home, and visit www.ASPCA.org/HelpFido to pledge to make adoption your first option and help shelter dogs around the country.

24w



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 **montydoodleddoo** • Follow ...
Brooklyn, New York

montydoodleddoo My parents wanted to spread the word to help Fidos across the country. Visit www.ascpa.org/HelpFido and support @ascpa #FindYourFido #adoptdontshop #rescuedogsofinstagram

24w



 **nawhitling** 🥰🥰 ...
24w 1 like Reply

 **normanthe donkey** ❤️❤️❤️ ...
24w 1 like Reply



882 likes

OCTOBER 28, 2018

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Sample

- SPCA of Westchester
- The San Francisco SPCA
- SPCA of Florida
- Valley Oak SPCA
- East Bay SPCA
- SPCA for Monterey County
- Brandywine Valley SPCA
- Charlottesville-Albemarle SPCA
- SPCA Tampa Bay
- Fredericksburg Regional SPCA

Measures

Live Release Rate

All branches of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals understand their statistics by formulating the live release rate for the year:

Live Release Rate = Live Release / [Live Release + (Total Euthanasia - Owner Request)]

Live releases include adoptions, returning animals to their rightful owners, and transfers to foster carers or other shelters. This rate is what the shelters understand their success to be for the year out of 100% success rates. The year end live release rate does not include owner requested euthanasia and animals that naturally passed away while in the shelter or went missing.

AMEC Framework for Social Media Measurement

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The AMEC Social Media Measurement Tool sets meaningful objectives and then allows for organizations to measure the effectiveness of digital and social media communication campaigns. The appropriate route to measuring communications success depends in every case on what it is that the organization is trying to achieve. The organization must understand its goals, map the communications objectives against them, then clarify what success looks like in each case.

Program, Business and Channel Social Media Measurement Framework

	EXPOSURE	ENGAGEMENT	PREFERENCE	IMPACT	ADVOCACY
PROGRAM METRICS					
CHANNEL METRICS					
BUSINESS METRICS					

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The AMEC Framework makes it easier for communication professionals to plan, monitor and measure results against their individual objectives. This measurement tools allows practitioners to to consider each stage of communications measurement and how they relate to each other.

The framework helps organizations plan campaigns, set achievable targets, choose appropriate

SMART metrics and tell the whole story of the value that the campaign has had on an organization.

Program Metrics are metrics that are directly tied to the campaign objectives. Business metrics are designed to measure the impact to the business or organization of the campaign or initiative. Channel metrics are metrics that are unique to specific social media channels such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Vimeo, LinkedIn, etc. Their framework works best for social media campaigns that integrates closely with more traditional public relations efforts or offline marketing campaigns, for the metrics for those other elements can be included in the program and channel metrics lines.

Exposure is the potential audience exposed to content and messages. Engagement is the interactions that occur in response to the content on an owned channel. In layman's terms, this would be how the audience is engaging with the organization and also earned conversations on social media that talk about the organization or the campaign. The preference metric is the ability to cause or contribute to a change in opinion or behavior. Impact is the effect the campaign has had on the target audience. This can include, but is not limited to, any financial impact towards the organization from the campaign. The advocacy metric includes positive sentiment such as recommendations, call to actions, call to purchases, suggested usage or changes of opinions towards the organization stated by others on social media about you, the organization, or you, the campaign.

This framework helps show how various components affect one another. It can show an overarching cause-and-effect relationship running throughout - from left to right, but also from top to bottom. The important piece is that the Framework helps to guide an organization's understanding of how these various components affect one another.

Instrument

To best measure whether the public relations efforts of the SPCA have been successful or not, we will examine data from multiple SPCA’s across the United States. The data includes cross-analyzing live release rates of animals in the shelter vs. social media exposure. Since the campaign ran exclusively online through their social media efforts, this should provide us with best results on how the #FindyourFido campaign impacted the adoption rates in the respective shelters.

For this study, we will solely be focusing on the online-channel of engagement, which includes website, emails, blogs and social media presence. Since we are focusing on utilizing audience-centric approaches, the focus of the measurement will be based off of the selected SPCAs’ social media accounts like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram.

Reliability and Validity

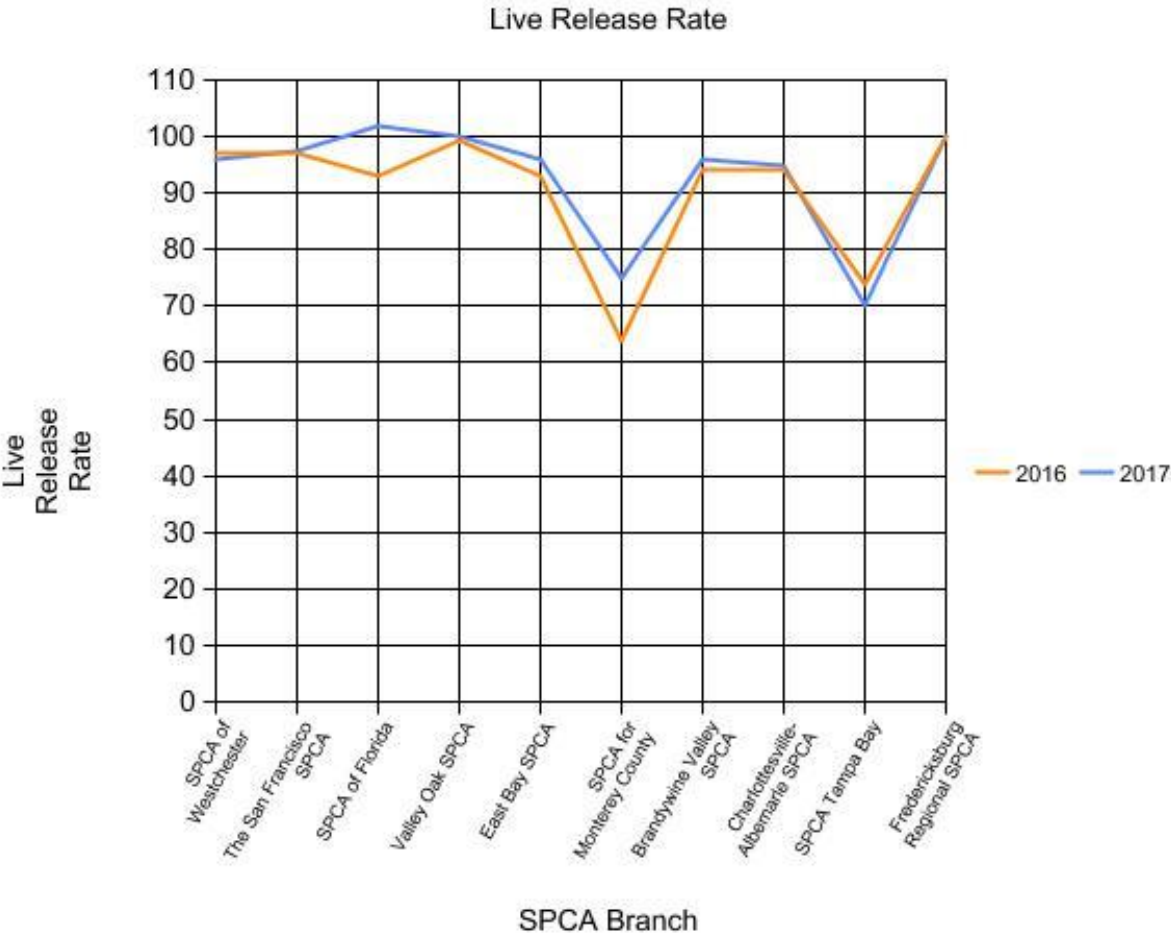
The branches that were chosen to take part in this data analysis were based off of geographic location and size. Each location and size are vastly different from the other, and this was done in order to ensure that, though these factors play a part in ultimate success, these were not decided factors on whether the campaign was successful or not.

Data Analysis

Live Release Rate

SPCA Branch	2016 Live Release Rate	2017 Live Release Rate
SPCA of Westchester	97	96
The San Francisco SPCA	97.1	97.4
SPCA of Florida	93	102
Valley Oak SPCA	99.2	100
East Bay SPCA	93	96

SPCA for Monterey County	64	75
Brandywine Valley SPCA	94	96
Charlottesville	94	95
SPCA Tampa Bay	74	70
Fredericksburg Regional SPCA	99.9	99.9



As previously stated, the Live Release Rate, a formula used across most SPCA entities in the United States, is used to calculate the overall success of releases in an annual year. This rate can be equated to success rate, for it means that these dogs and/or cats were introduced to a better

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living situation rather than the one they were currently in. This could be through adoption, fostering opportunities or being transferred to safe-havens.

The data was analyzed between the 2016 year and the 2017 year, for the #FindYourFido campaign was introduced in October of 2017. Thus, the results should accurately portray significant effects of the campaign, for this was the only major campaign being conducted by the ASPCA during that specific time. Though there are some outliers, generally, there is either a raise in Live Release Rates or a stagnant result. This shows ultimate raise in success of live release rates between the years of 2016 and 2017, which can be equated to the #FindYourFido campaign. All of these shelters took part in the campaign.

AMEC Social Media Measurement for 2017 Find Your Fido National Campaign

Program, Business and Channel Social Media Measurement Framework

	EXPOSURE	ENGAGEMENT	PREFERENCE	IMPACT	ADVOCACY
PROGRAM METRICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to see from both Dodo and ASPCA dedicated accounts • 76% increase in campaign-related mentions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40% interaction rate on dedicated social media pages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 86% increase in recognition of shelter animals in need of homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 51% use of #FindYourFido by Verified Influencers • 44% increase of pet foster parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success stories of having adopted from shelters • Total Mentions 40% Increase
CHANNEL METRICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating groups reported more community awareness of their local organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 87% increase in click throughs to the local websites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40% increase in share of adoptions as a result of social media use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 66% increase in overall adoptions • 55% increase in adoptions of hard to place pets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 86% increase in general awareness of SPCA organizations
BUSINESS METRICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18,000 tweets using #FindYourFido • 75% of local shelters say that the campaign with social media increased their organizations goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 76% increase in local shelter social media usage • 88% success rate of using Facebook as a communication tool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 77.6% Positive or Neutral sentiment with #FindYourFido usage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 68% increase in unique visitors to local shelters social media and websites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45% increase in volunteers • 44% increase in pet foster parents • Participating groups reported improved adoptions

The #FindYourFido campaign success can largely be analyzed based off of social media analytics. Though the main goal of the ASPCA branches are to ultimately re-home the animals in need, this cannot be done without general awareness of their individual (local) organizations. In order to understand how the campaign affected general awareness and audience interaction, the AMEC Social Media Measurement tool was utilized in relation to the effects of the 2017 National #FindYourFido campaign. The results showed a general increase across all platforms, including raise in general awareness by 86%, due to the partnership with Dodo, 18,000 twitter mentions of the #FindYourFido hashtag and a general 76% increase in campaign related mentions throughout the month of October 2017. 77.6% of the mentions of the campaign, after analyzed on the social media analytics tool Meltwater, were mentioned with positive or neutral sentiment. This means that the meaning and effect of the campaign curated a high emotional response from the general audience, leading to more awareness, and emotional investment.

Timeline

The campaign was analyzed throughout a year between October 2016 to the end of 2017 in order to show the change in awareness and investment that the campaign had towards the local SPCA's, largely on social media. The times that the data was most analyzed was during both months of October 2016 and 2017, where the campaign was in full effect across social media.

Chapter 4

Results

Discussion

The results show a general increase in live release rates, which we can equate to successful adoptions or safer placements of shelter animals. This proves that the social media campaign #FindYourFido was impactful and successful in increasing adoptions across multiple SPCA's across the United States. This means that social media campaigns should be continued to be utilized in efforts to raise awareness and potentially increase adoptions. Perhaps with a more audience-centric approach, rather than just a simple social media campaign, the shelters can encourage more consumers to adopt animals in need.

“According to a recent survey by the ASPCA, social media use is growing among animal shelters and rescue organizations, and those who work at these organizations feel that it is helping them generate increased public support and save the lives of more animals in need” (EDGE, 2018). With this recent survey (*Effectiveness of Social Media Use on Impact of Animal Shelters*), it is clear that utilizing social media to increase communication and awareness is incredibly effective, it just needs to be utilized in the correct way and directed at a target audience. “In short, social media is an important and still growing resource for shelters and rescue organizations. With support like that offered by the ASPCA and other organizations, these groups can increase their reach and impact for homeless animals in their communities” (EDGE, 2018).

Suggested Implementation

Problem & Opportunity Statement

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is the first humane society to be established in North America, and is, today, one of the largest in the world (ASPCA, 2019). The mission, as stated by founder Henry Bergh in 1866, is “to provide effective means for the prevention of cruelty to animals throughout the United States” (Bergh, 1866). Though the SPCAs across the world are independent of one another with its own governing policies, financial reports, board of directors and organization goals, the ASPCA works to provide campaigns and resources to boost adoptions across the United States. The local SPCAs and ASPCA are nonprofit organizations that lack adequate funding. The shelters are continuing to exceed capacities in given areas, forcing decisions (euthanization) to be made that go against the mission and goal of the SPCA. Though the ASPCA has a strong social media presence, the local SPCA’s could partner with the ASPCA in stronger ways in order to boost local and individual social media presences’ and awareness. In order to target the best target audience, the ASPCA should focus on strictly audience-centric communication. The ASPCA and their respective branches should work to understand who their audience is and curate communicative efforts that will benefit the consumer rather than the organization.

Developing the App

Background on the Issue

The ASPCA and local SPCA shelters are registered nonprofit animal welfare organizations. Since the ASPCA and SPCA are not government agencies, they rely on donations from their supporters to continue their goal as animal protectors. While the ASPCA has a strong presence in society and on social media, the local SPCA chapters, which are not legally affiliated, have a more difficult time with messaging to the consumer.

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The local SPCA's offer wide arrays of services, that require donations, that are unknown to the public. While the ASPCA and most branches have loyal customers and volunteers, the organization as a whole still struggles with overflow of animals in need, and minimal opportunities for live-release. Without uniform branding and partnering together as an entity, the ASPCA and local SPCA shelters struggle with effectively communicating their needs to their targeted audiences. The ASPCA and local SPCA shelters could increase consumer awareness by partnering and branding as a uniform entity across their social media and through the integration of an app.

Competition

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) is the largest animal rights organization in the world, with more than 3 million members and supporters. PETA focuses its attention on the four areas in which the largest numbers of animals suffer the most intensely for the longest periods of time: factory farms, clothing trade, laboratories and the entertainment industry. PETA and the ASPCA and local SPCA shelters offer similar solutions to the pet overpopulation problem. Because these organizations have similar goals, PETA could be receiving awareness and funding from consumers that could be benefiting the ASPCA as well.

External Impediments

Consumers are unpredictable in their reactions to nonprofit organizations. Since the organizations are arguably not mutually-beneficial to the consumer, consumers tend to choose to spend their time and money elsewhere. Often called the "bystander effect," this human trait allows consumers to assume that someone else will do what needs to be done for the nonprofit organization. (Fritz, 2018) Researchers in one experiment found that 70 percent of participants who are alone and heard sounds of distress from another person in an adjoining room responded

and helped. When two participants were together, the response rate to the sounds of pain fell significantly, in one case to a mere seven percent (Lindquist, 2012). Consumers often don't respond to the needs of nonprofit organization if they think that others will pick up the slack.

SWOT Analysis

<p><i>Strengths</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strong presence online (providing information, collecting donations, selling merchandise) ● Each branch website is extensive with easy-to-access information ● Strong partnership with media brand Dodo ● Strong mentions from celebrities (Nina Dobrev, Patrick Wilson, Sarah Hyland, Kristin Chenoweth) 	<p><i>Weaknesses</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limited shelter capacity when compared to the number of intakes and average number of pet population ● No funding received from any federal or local government ● SPCA branches across the United States hold different brandings rather than being united as the ASPCA (no central logo or main connection between the branches makes them hard to recognize as part of the ASPCA)
<p><i>Opportunities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Make the process of adoption easier by implementing an app that brings the process to the consumers hands and homes ● Utilize strong ASPCA social media presence by implementing a campaign for the local SPCA shelters to resonate with 	<p><i>Threats</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Opposing animal welfare organizations ● Breeders (people who want to buy animals from breeders)

Campaign Aims and Objectives

Objectives are goals that a business plans to achieve, often through the use of a campaign. When creating an objective, it is helpful to use the SMART acronym as a guideline: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-oriented. SMART objectives are important because they make measurement and evaluation in campaigns more effective. By having clear objectives from the start, the investment in communication efforts are inevitably stronger.

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Specific clearly defines the objective so that all involved in public relations efforts are aware of the end-goal. *Measurable* ensures that the goals that are hoped to be reached are measurable, in order to provide clear progress towards the objective. *Achievable* displays a reasonable time period as to when the objectives can be successfully completed. *Realistic* allows for understanding whether or not the goals are realistic. If they are not, objectives need to be changed or the timeline needs to be changed. *Timely* fortifies that the objective will be completed by a certain date or time (Smith, 2017).

Utilizing the SMART approach solidifies that the communication goals are flowing directly out of the organizational goals in order to achieve lasting results and demonstrate impact through measurable outcomes.

Specific

- To raise awareness of local SPCA organizations
- To increase the number of adoptions across the United States

Measurable

- Raise the Live Release Rate across local SPCA's by 5%
- Increase the number of followers across local SPCA's social media pages by 50%

Achievable

- In the first month where the campaign and app are executed, downloads of the App should be geographically evident in all areas of local SPCA shelters

Realistic

- *Educate the public on the state of the shelters by granting easier access to relating to the shelter animals in their area through the PAWNDER app*

Timely

- Over a period of three months of executing the #PAWNDERAdoption Campaign

Objective #1: Increase traffic and interaction for SPCA Website Content.

Strategy: Promote adoption opportunities via social media by taking advantage of trending topics in the digital sphere while evoking emotions from consumers through content.

Tactics:

- Indebted social media campaign: #PAWNDERAdoption, that would feature a different animal up for adoption each day
- Use #PAWNDERAdoption with each post related to the campaign

Objective 2: Increase the overall number of adoptions of all animals through the entire organization of the ASPCA.

Strategy: Take an audience-centric approach by simplifying the process of matching with potential pets through an integrated app.

Tactics:


- Create an app, based off of the design of Tinder, where potential households could match with a shelter pet that best fits their needs.
- Ensure that all branches of the SPCA, and eventually other animal organizations, are partnered with the app

Pawnder App Design



The goal of the design of the PAWNDER app was to make it easy to use by every consumer possible, including children. Studies suggest that pets are more likely to be found in households with children than in any other household type (Purewal, 2017). Thus, it is important to ensure that a variety of users can utilize the app. PAWNDER allows for consumers to select their preferences of animal type before even meeting potential candidates. This includes: type of animal, gender, age, activity level, breed, and location. This is to ensure that the consumer does not feel like they are being persuaded to adopt a specific animal, but rather to put the power of the process into their hands. The consumer feels less obligated to adopt for society, and more so to adopt for the needs of the family. Once these options are selected, potential matches appear on


Preferences...



Female Male

Puppy Adult Senior


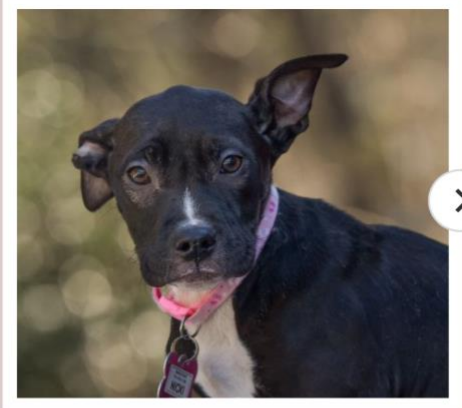
Activity Level



Breed:



Terrier

Location

Nicki, Terrier

Puppy
Female
Terrier
Spayed/Neutered
Saving Grace North Carolina

the screen with multiple pictures. The consumer can choose the two hearts button to save and schedule a meeting with the local shelter or organization or can choose the squiggly “pass” button to come back to the animal at a different time if it were not the animal they were looking for. The goal is to make the process easy, put the consumer into the role of decision-maker, and ensure that no animal is seen as being “rejected”, but rather passed for later.

Limitations of the Research

Only specific branches of the SPCA released their individual statistics regarding their live release rate, thus I could only analyze the data amongst a few branches rather than choosing the

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ones that should either provide the best results, or analyzing all of the branches across the United States, which would have also taken more time than this research allowed me for.

There is no federal system to define or regulate shelters. Human societies and SPCAs are not affiliated with the national ASPCA or the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS).

Although some states regulate animal shelters, the guidelines for animal care may be rudimentary at best.

Suggested Research

With the limited time and resources associated with this study, more research should be allocated to receiving access to all of the numbers of success rates of shelters across the United States in reference to multiple campaigns to analyze whether social media was a deciding factor in the ultimate growth of awareness.

While the analyzed research allowed to provide a basis of understanding on how to best approach public relations efforts for the ASPCA, the future should focus on how to best unite the individual shelters for ultimate communicative powers. This partnership should begin through the implementation and utilization of the PAWNDER app.

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