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Embracing Social Media for Stakeholder Management within NPOs – A Case Study

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Abstract: Social media became highly popular over the last fifteen years since the introduction of Web 2.0 and is now used as a successful marketing and communication tool by many companies. The benefits include the cheap, easy and instantaneous posting of messages and the incomparable coverage of various platforms as well as smart features, like the promotion of events on Facebook. Hence, the embedding of social media into the overall business strategy is a great chance to achieve a better performance in terms of stakeholder management. This is especially promising for small- and medium-sized non-profit organizations (NPOs), who do not have the resources to invest in more expensive forms of marketing or stakeholder management. Nevertheless, companies often struggle with the implementation of social media strategies, especially due to the spread of diverse platforms and the lack of resources to maintain the accounts. This paper asks how small- and medium-sized NPOs can use social media to achieve stakeholder commitment. A study using a mixed-method approach was conducted in cooperation with a voluntary organization of the Catholic Church sector in Germany, called *KjG Diözesanverband Essen*. The study captured information on KjG's stakeholders' use and preferences of popular social media platforms. Interviews were conducted with the organization's key stakeholders to examine the existing social media and stakeholder strategy. The results of 139 questionnaires and five interviews revealed important stakeholders' usage patterns of social media platforms and the top-ranked ones for receiving information, which makes them highly interesting for stakeholder communication. A framework was designed to support NPOs with the strategic use of social media for stakeholder management.

Keywords: Social Media, Stakeholder Management, Non-profit organizations, Organizational Strategy, Marketing and Communication Tools, Catholic Church Sector

1. Introduction

The idea behind social media is to enable individuals to publish information and thoughts on the world wide web by providing various software applications (Freberg, 2016). Its development caused a power shift from companies to consumers by growing with more and more users adding content to the World Wide Web. Furthermore, individuals rely more on the opinions of peoples' reviews and recommendations published in the internet than on organization's advertising campaigns and statements. This is the reason why social media became even more a key driver for the marketing and communication strategy of various companies (Benthaus, Risius and Beck, 2016).

Stakeholders are individuals who are related to an organization and have a profound interest in the business performance and its future. Moreover, various stakeholder groups can have high influence on the organization's business, dependent on their position and level of power within the company. At the same time, some stakeholder groups can be highly dependent on the company's success. Hence, there exists an interdependence between both parties and therefore, many companies include stakeholder management into their regular operations (Gerry et al., 2017).

Social media can work as a stakeholder management tool to communicate and interact with customers, employees, government, shareholders, suppliers and a lot more. Social media is not comparable to the traditional forms of media marketing, such as print, broadcast or telephone marketing, because the various platforms provide new and individual communication tools and involve more opportunities for stakeholder participation. Furthermore, the numerous platforms offer many opportunities to spread information which can be an advantage and disadvantage at the same time. To serve all the different platforms and channels can take a lot of time and lead to bottlenecks in allocating resources. Therefore, companies have to act strategically to make the best use of social media, though many are struggling with this (Quesenberry, 2016).

Moreover, social media and its'numerous platforms provide opportunities for developing a cheaper marketing strategy compared to traditional marketing tools. Therefore, it is a chance especially for non-profit organizations to improve their business performance (Quesenberry, 2016). However, the fact that every organization can use social media platforms to pursue marketing in a fast, easy and cheap way causes higher competition among companies (Shirumisha, Lal and Abubakre, 2017).
This paper describes a study which aimed to develop a framework to support non-profit organizations to take advantage of social media regarding stakeholder commitment as part of their organizational strategy.
The findings revealed that *Facebook* and *YouTube* are the most frequent used social media platforms for retrieving information. In addition, Instagram is often used for communication and information purposes. Furthermore, the findings showed that such organizations have immense issues with creating and publishing social media content. This has various causes, but the main factor are the introduced General Data Protection Regulations.
This paper is divided into four sections. Section II will give background information about the two main drivers of the study, social media and stakeholder management and as well as the cooperating organisation. In Section III a description of the study's methodology will be given and Section IV reports the results and discussion, followed by a conclusion in Section V.

2. Background

2.1 Social Media

Social media is a phenomenon, which is still evolving and changing in a rapid pace. Hence, it is difficult to define the term precisely (Quan-Haase and Sloan, 2016). Quan-Haase and Sloan (2016) identified three main indicators to define social media: '(a) what activities social media enables, (b) how it enables these activities, and (c) the content it contains' (Quan-Haase and Sloan, 2016). The outcome of this definition is that social media contains user-generated content, is set up as a web-based service and enables their users to connect with each other. In this way, numerous people are using social media for staying in touch with friends or for receiving information about the people or organizations they are interested in. On the other hand, organizations are using social media for placing their services or products online and for communication and informing their various stakeholder groups (Benthaus, Risius and Beck, 2016).
Social Media was soon seen by organizations as a high potential marketing tool which is not comparable to the traditional forms of marketing (Quesenberry, 2016). The main difference between both marketing forms is the way of communication. Traditional marketing is about one-way communication, whereas social media marketing consists of two-way communication, whereby users of social media gained a high degree of power through those various platforms (Safko, 2012). Therefore, the process of developing marketing strategies changed to listen to customer needs first than to directly sell products and services. Thus, social media became a tool to gather data and information about consumer needs by tracking their reviews and comments (Safko, 2012).
Additionally, many organizations use the opportunity to engage their communication, sales or public relations activities via social media. Hence, it can be used to provide their customer service more accessible and efficient or to complement their internal communication tools (Safko, 2012).
The instinctual need for people to interact with other individuals with the same interests, values, and ideas exists since the beginning of human being. The only thing that changed over the years is the way people share their thoughts, opinions, and experience of their daily lives (Safko, 2012). Social media is one of those ways, and furthermore, many tools have been developed to make this process of sharing easier and faster like, i.e., photo sharing, audio, vlogging, lifecasting or virtual worlds (Safko, 2012). The foundations of the today's social media environment were made in the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century with the sale of MySpace for US$580 million in 2005, bought by Rupert Murdoch (Meikle, 2016). Nowadays there are numerous social media platforms available on the World Wide Web, and all those apps are in some way different from each other. The most of them are for free and can be joined on- and offline (Safko, 2012).

2.2 Stakeholder Management:

Stakeholders are those individuals who are related to an organization and have a deep interest in the business performance and its future (Johnson et al., 2017). They can be separated into diverse groups, depending on the organization itself. Typical stakeholder groups are shareholders, customers, employees, owners, and suppliers. Some companies have more stakeholder groups than others, depending on the size and the business of an organization. Stakeholder opinions and behaviour are of high importance for a firm and its strategy, especially for the future (Freeman, 2010).

Stakeholder management is a highly relevant part of an organisation's strategy and can become a challenge if a company has numerous stakeholders. Hence, it is essential for an organization to identify and group their stakeholders first to achieve a better understanding of their behavior.

In general stakeholders can be divided into two main groups, which are external and internal stakeholders (Freeman, 2010). Furthermore, they can be categorized dependent on the level of power and attention that they have in an organization (Johnson et al., 2017). Not all stakeholders continuously have the same level of interest for a company. Technological stakeholders, for example, are more critical during the development phase of a product than they are in series production (Johnson et al., 2017). Though, it is not to be assumed that a stakeholder with an elevated level of power has the same level of attention to an issue. Both aspects can differ massively from each other, and therefore, it can be strategically relevant for an organization to map their stakeholders. Furthermore, similar stakeholder groups can require different actions (Walker, Bourne, and Shelley, 2008). Therefore, the mapping process can help an organization to identify the critical stakeholders for their various projects. Depending on the classification of the individual or the whole stakeholder group, an organization can define the actions of how to deal with them to achieve their goals.

Social media platforms offer various possibilities for stakeholder management, as they are an excellent tool for communicating with stakeholders to keep them informed about organizational news and events. Furthermore, social media is used more and more for advertising purposes (Saxton and Guo, 2014). Additionally, it entails an opportunity for non-profit organizations to complement their stakeholder communication strategy. Hence, social media provides a unique way of interacting with individuals that cannot be reached in this extent via other forms of media. Moreover, the costs of using social media are low, and the simplicity and efficiency are unsurpassed. Those are aspects of which non-profit organizations can take advantages of (Saxton and Guo, 2014).

2.3 KjG Diözesanverband Essen

The study was conducted in cooperation with the *KjG Diözesanverband Essen*, which is a non-profit organization in the sector of the Catholic Church and located in Essen, Germany. KjG is the German abbreviation for "Katholische junge Gemeinde" which can be translated with "Catholic Youth Community". It is a communion where young people can come together in weekly meetings, for day trips or other events while living Christian values. The objective is to show younger people how to form an opinion and take social and political responsibility.

KjG has various stakeholders to reach, inform and communicate with, and they use different communication tools of which one is social media. Hence, the *KjG Diözesanverband Essen* emerged as a great partner to conduct the case study.

The organization has around eleven different stakeholder groups, which are, for example, the Volunteers, Training Team, Diocesan Management, Staff, Politics, Parents or Potential Members. All of them have a different level of power and attention to the organization. This is the reason why an identification and analysis are highly important for them to be able to satisfy the different stakeholders' needs.

For communicating and informing those stakeholders about news and events, the organization is using *Facebook*, *Instagram* and *YouTube* as different social media platforms. Though, it was clearly stated that currently they are just concentrating on creating content for *Facebook* and *Instagram*. Furthermore, they decided to set the focus on volunteers, children-and-youth-leaders and members of their different work groups as the main target groups of their social media accounts.

All in all, it came across that the organization is aware of their different stakeholder groups and follows a social media strategy. Nevertheless, the central part of their advertising and stakeholder communication still consists out of conventional media, like their member magazine as print media or e-mail communication.

3. Case Study

The following section will present the case study in more detail by describing its design and the methodology itself. Furthermore, the analysis of the study results and the recommendations, which have been developed out of them, will be illustrated within the last two sections of this chapter.

3.1 Design

The purpose of this research was to develop a framework, which should support small- and medium-sized no-profit organizations with their social media and stakeholder strategy and management. Therefore, information about the use of social media within non-profit organizations was gathered. In consequence of the cooperation with an NGO, the study can be categorized as applied research, which has the objective to solve a given problem of an organization with the support of research findings (Habib, Pathik, and Maryam, 2014).
The research question the study aimed to answer is:

> "How can small and medium-sized non-profit organizations use social media platforms to achieve stakeholder commitment?".

To answer this question and to develop a framework which supports this topic, primary and secondary data was gathered and analysed to explore the use of social media by organisations and then specifically by KjG and its stakeholders. For primary data collection, a quantitative and qualitative research approach, so a mixed methods approach, was chosen. The quantitative study was conducted by developing a questionnaire with the objective to gain information about the social media use of different stakeholder groups within the organization. The questionnaire itself contained 23 single questions which were divided into four different question categories. The first category dealt with the necessary demographic information of the participant and their connection to the organization. The second had the objective to receive information about the participant's behaviour regarding various social media platforms. Furthermore, the next category asked about the participant's interest in the content of the social media accounts of the organization. The last category competed the questionnaire with two open-ended questions, which asked the participants about what they like or dislike about social media.
The qualitative study comprised interview questions, which were designed in a semi-structured way, which means that a few questions were set upfront and further questions were asked based on the responses of the participants. In total, five interviews were made on the phone or in person with different stakeholder groups to ensure that various perspectives on the use of social media were gathered. The entire interview contained eight proper questions and a prepended part which included questions about the interviewee's gender, age, responsibility within the organization and their personal use of social media. The following questions asked the participant to give a definition of social media and their opinion about its importance for their organization. The further questions dealt with addressing stakeholders via social media by asking the interviewee about the ability to use social media platforms for their stakeholder management. In addition, it was asked about possible issues with their social media strategy and in which way they think to solve them. The interview ended with an open question, which asked about the interviewee's personal feelings, thoughts and opinions about social media.

3.2 Methodology

The methodology of the case study can be separated into two parts. The first step was to conduct a literature review of social media and stakeholder management, and existing frameworks and guidance (see Section II).
The next step was to analyse the organisation, KjG, to consider its existing strategy and establish its stakeholders. Those were then analysed using stakeholder mapping to determine the different groups' power and attention to the organization, which can be seen in Figure 1.

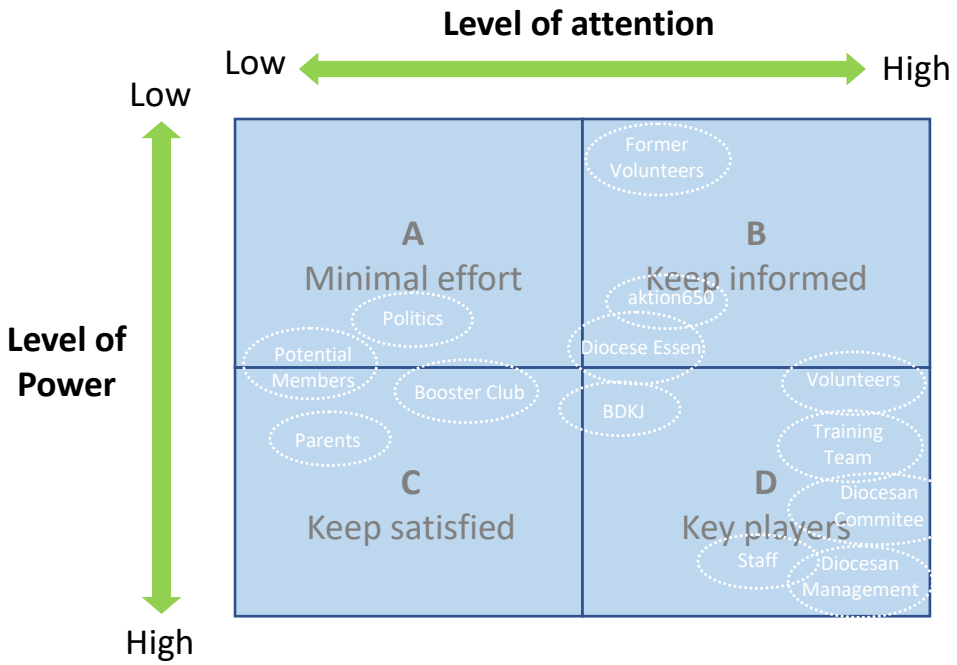

Figure 1: Power and attention matrix for the *KjG Diözesanverband Essen*

Johnson et al. (2017) developed a matrix to support the process of mapping stakeholders regarding their level of power and attention. Each stakeholder group has a different level of power for a specific project or within a whole organization. Moreover, the level of attention a stakeholder assigns to a project, deviates from individual to individual. Hence, it is not to be assumed that a stakeholder with an elevated level of power has the same level of attention to an issue. Both aspects can differ massively from each other, and therefore, it can be strategically relevant for an organization to map their stakeholders. Furthermore, similar stakeholder groups can require different actions (Walker, Bourne, and Shelley, 2008). Therefore, the mapping process can help an organization to identify the critical stakeholders for their various projects. Depending on the classification of the individual or the whole stakeholder group, an organization can define the actions of how to deal with them to achieve their goals.

The information for developing the shown matrix was given by interviewing different stakeholder groups, such as members of the Staff, the Diocesan Committee or Volunteers. Those were perfect representatives to give valuable information about the organization's stakeholder and social media strategy, because those are the ones who are managing it. Each stakeholder group was discussed separately and in comparison with other groups with the interviewees to be able to place them within the matrix.

The matrix helps to define, which stakeholders are key players for the organization and hence, highly necessary for their success. Furthermore, the matrix was used to determine the stakeholder's relevance to take part in the study.

Therefore, a list of stakeholders was made to which the questionnaire was sent out. The development of the stakeholder list, which can be seen in Table 1, was made in collaboration with the organization. First, the main criteria for choosing stakeholders was the availability of contact details like an e-mail address or connection via social media. Furthermore, the relevance of the stakeholder groups was essential to create the list. Therefore, the power and attention matrix (see Figure 1) as created to define, which stakeholders are key players for the organization and hence, highly necessary for their success. Finally, the last criterion for the development of the list was the definition of the primary target group of the organization, which are volunteers and children-and-youth-leaders. All those criteria were used to define, which stakeholders should be contacted for taking part in the study.

Table 1: List of contacted stakeholders

1.	Volunteers
2.	Staff
3.	Diocesan Management
4.	Diocesan Committee
5.	Parents
6.	Members
7.	Training Team
8.	Former Volunteers

3.3 Analysis

The most significant and interesting results of the study will be presented in this section by showing the outcome of the questionnaires first, followed by the interviews. Afterwards, a discussion will combine and compare those results.

3.3.1 Quantitative Study

The quantitative study comprised a questionnaire that was sent out to a list of stakeholders. The explanation of the study method and the sampling process can be reviewed in section 3.1 and 3.2. In total, 139 participants have submitted the questionnaire, which gives a response rate of around 9.27%. This number assumes that around 1,500 could have been reached via e-mail distribution lists and social media channels.
Figure 2 shows a bar chart which relates the stakeholder belonging of the participants to their age group. The main group of age, which is 18 to 30, and the one of stakeholders, which is "Member", coincide, which means that most of the participants who are members of the organization are at this age. Also, the volunteers and staff, which also belong to the main target group of the organization, are mainly represented by this age.

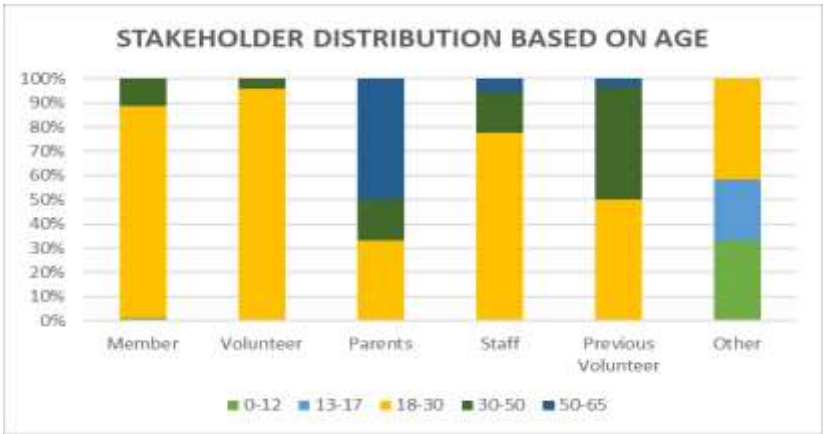

Figure 2: Stakeholder distribution based on age

The relation of accessed social media platforms and stakeholder belonging, shown in Figure 3, makes clear that all stakeholder groups are using each of the leading platforms. Some of them are used with a higher percentage and some with less. Though, it is interesting that the organization's target groups mainly chose *Facebook*, *YouTube* and *Instagram* with a quite high rate of nearly and over 60%.

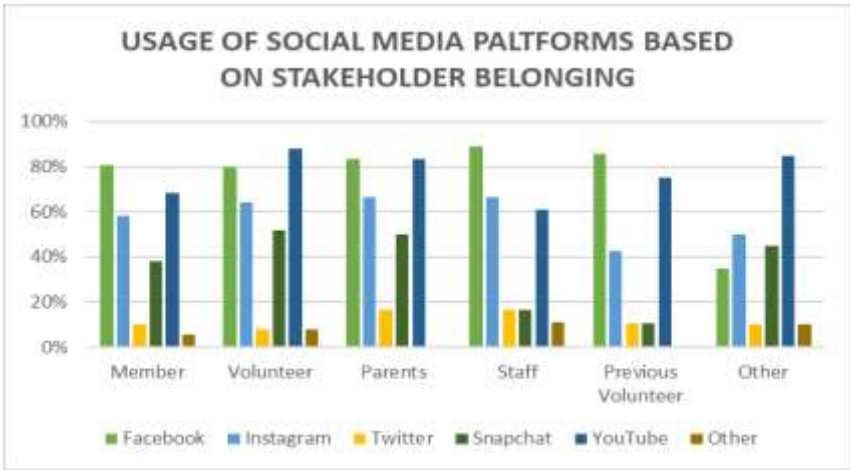

Figure 3: Usage of social media platforms based on stakeholder belonging

For Figure 4 the reason for using social media "Retrieving Information" was taken as the base, because this is the most interesting platform usage for the organization. Furthermore, the three most chosen social media platforms, which are *Facebook*, *Instagram* and *YouTube,* were considered to verify, how many stakeholders picked those platforms to retrieve information. The results show that more than 70% of the members and volunteers indicated to use *Facebook* for retrieving data. Furthermore, more than 50% of volunteers and more than 80% of parents are using *YouTube* to receive information. Additionally, over 50% of the staff is using *Facebook* for the same reason, whereas less than 40% is using *YouTube*. Finally, *Instagram* is mostly used for receiving information from parents and volunteers with more than 60% and nearly 40%.

Figure 4: Retrieving Information via the main social media platforms based on stakeholder belonging

3.3.2 Qualitative Study

The qualitative study comprised five interviews that were conducted with specific stakeholders. The age span of the participants ranges from 25 to 38 but concentrates around the late twenties. Furthermore, 40% of the participants are female, and 60% are male. Regarding the stakeholder belonging of the interviewees, two of them are members of the staff of the organization, one is part of the diocesan management, and two are volunteers of a KjG community in Bochum. Hence, the participants are a good representation of the primary target an age group of the organization and their opinions and experiences are highly valuable.

The interview can be categorized into five groups of questions, which asked the participants about a definition of social media, the importance of social media for their organization, the use of social media for stakeholder management, the organization's issues with social media and their personal opinions about it.

Regarding the first category, all the interviewees stated similar points. Hence, the answers were grouped into six categories, which can be seen in Figure 5. Furthermore, the bar chart illustrates which stakeholders mentioned the particular category. It can be seen that the possibility to connect via social media was given in every interview. On the other hand, just the organization's staff mentioned the informative character of various platforms and in this way the opportunity to share information.

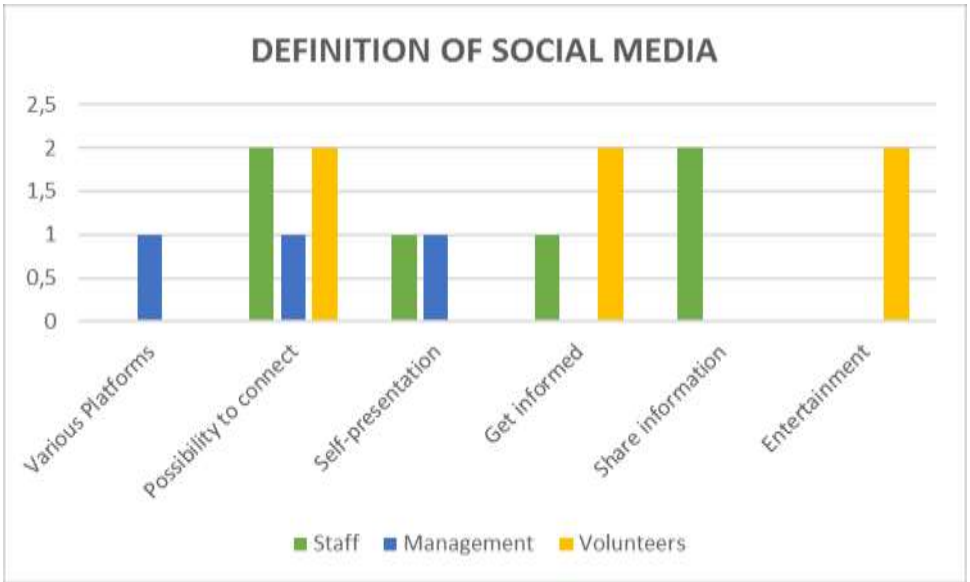

Figure 5: Definition of social media given by interviewees

The next question had the purpose of receiving information about the importance of social media in their organization and their thoughts and opinions about the relevance of using different platforms. Also here, all interviewees shared similar thoughts and stated that social media is highly relevant and essential for the *KjG Diözesanverband Essen*. On the one hand, it was mentioned that social media and especially *Facebook* is an excellent tool to reach the main target group of the organization. On the other hand, social media gives the possibility to share information about past and upcoming events very quickly and to get in touch with people directly and in a casual and non-binding way.

Within the next category, the interviewees were asked to share their opinions and experiences about which stakeholders can be reached via the organization's social media accounts and which ones not. The participants repeated that social media is especially useful to reach the target groups, which are volunteers, members, and staff. This estimation is proved by the analysis of the reactions and followers of their *Facebook* and *Instagram* accounts. Nevertheless, there are some stakeholder groups, who are difficult to reach via social media. Those are for example children, who are often not allowed to use social media, because of their parents or the platform itself does not enable users within a specific age. Parents are more interested in the *Facebook* account of the organization to look at pictures of their children and hence, this platform presents a way to reach them. Some stakeholder groups, like the diocese Essen or the BDKJ, do not belong to the organization's main target group, though they have their own social media accounts and are following each other. In this way, there is a connection between those stakeholder groups and the organization, and hence, they are informed and updated about each other. On the other hand, stakeholders like the press, politics or potential members, are regarded to be nearly impossible to reach via social media. The reason, which was mentioned, is that there is no interest in the organization itself because they are too small. Hence, personal contact is seen as a better way to get in touch with them.

All the interviewees admitted that they have some issues with their social media accounts. Those issues were also grouped into six categories, which are:

- The GDPR, which makes it difficult to share pictures or videos without consent
- Missing content and ideas for posts, which can be published
- The monotony of content that is currently shared

- Missing skills to take professional photos
- Missing time to create content and taking care of the social media accounts
- The missing interest of other stakeholders to create and share content

Figure 6 shows a bar chart which illustrates those categories and the amount of interviewees who mentioned those categories in terms of their stakeholder belonging. It becomes clear that the organization's main issues with social media are the GDPR, missing content and the lack of interest of other stakeholders to contribute information. In addition, further minor issues were mentioned by the staff, which comprise missing skills and time to produce content and its monotony. All in all, the lack of content and in addition, the GDPR makes it hard to share the little content that is available and hence, such organizations have difficulties with running social media accounts.

Figure 6: Issues with social media

The last question of the interview asked the participants to give their personal opinions about social media. All interviewees agreed that social media entails a great potential to promote an organization due to the reach and features which the various platforms provide. Though, regarding the professional use of social media for the organization, the interviewees shared the opinion that it is difficult to analyse which stakeholders can be reached and which ones not.

3.3.3 Discussion

The distribution of the questionnaire's participants represented the general member distribution of the organization regarding age and stakeholder belonging. The average age of the organization's members is 21.7 years, which lies in the age group of 18 to 30 which is the highest chosen age group of the study with 70%. Furthermore, most of the participants stated to belong to the following stakeholder groups: Members, Volunteers, and Staff. Those are the primary target groups of the organization, which was also mentioned in the interviews. Hence, the study results are highly valuable for the organization.
An interesting finding of the study is the interest in various social media platforms. The study showed that *Facebook*, *YouTube*, and *Instagram* are the most used platforms. The access of Snapchat is more rarely and mainly used for staying in touch with friends and family. Hence, the organization is already serving the preferred platforms with content.
Furthermore, the participants chose to use *Facebook* mainly for retrieving information and *YouTube* and *Instagram* for retrieving information and entertainment. The staff also gave the information to use especially *Facebook* for sharing events and news. The results show that this is a good strategy, but their *YouTube* account should receive more attention.
All in all, the results of the questionnaires and the interviews showed that the organization is well aware of their reach and their problems with their social media accounts. But they are not sure about the possible

solutions of those issues and also mentioned that an analysis of the social media behaviour could be helpful for this.

3.4 Recommendations

The following section will present the framework, which was developed with the support of the literature review and study results. The framework comprises 13 different recommendations, which should support small- and medium-sized non-profit organizations with their social media strategy and stakeholder management. In addition, justifications for every proposal were given that explain the different aspects and include references to the study results. Table 2 shows a summary of this framework and gives an overview of the various recommendations and justifications.

Table 2: Summary of Framework

No.	Recommendation	Justification
1	Identification of stakeholders	Stakeholder identification makes a subsequent analysis easier and more precise.
2	Analysis of stakeholders	A power and attention matrix can help to identify key players within stakeholders.
3	Identification of main target groups	Main target groups need special attention due to their high influence on the organization's success.
4	Definition of current social media strategy	Important to identify strengths and weaknesses within the current social media strategy to be able to improve it.
5	Use of *Facebook*, *Instagram* and *YouTube*	Study results revealed that *Facebook*, *Instagram* and *YouTube* are the most frequent used social media platforms.
6	Make stakeholders aware of your social media sites	Study results showed that around 40% of stakeholders are not aware of which social media platforms are used by an organization.
7	Organization of social media content	Interviews showed that the creation of social media content is a huge issue. The use of "organization Apps" can improve the planning process and therewith the social media content.
8	Creating templates for consent forms	Study results revealed that the new GDPR is a huge issue for organizations. An upfront-prepared template for consent forms makes it easier to be able to publish photos and videos.
9	Timing for posts	Study results showed that the best timing for posting content is in the afternoon and evening.
10	Cooperation with other organizations	The lack of resources and timing was stated as a big issue and therefore, a cooperation with other organizations could be helpful, especially for work-intensive social media content.
11	Get inspiration	The issue of missing content, which was mentioned during interviews, could be contained by having a look at other organization's platforms to get inspired.
12	Present your social media sites to others	Give stakeholders the opportunity to publish content on your social media sites. Thereby, more content will be available. Make the advantage of simplicity and coverage clear to them.

13	Development of photo and video competitions	Photo and video competitions can be an incentive for stakeholders to create content, which can be used for social media platforms.

4. Conclusion

This paper has described that an efficient use of social media platforms for stakeholder commitment can be an issue for organizations. Especially for NPOs, it is a problem to raise resources for this. Additionally, the research that exists on this topic, and could help such organizations, is limited.
The results of the study, which was conducted in cooperation with a NPO, revealed that stakeholders are using social media platforms out of various motives. Those can be dependent on their stakeholder belonging and age. Nevertheless, the results show that *Facebook*, *Instagram* and *YouTube* are the most preferred platforms. Furthermore, *Facebook* and *YouTube* are frequently used for retrieving information, which is a highly important factor for organizations and a reason for them to use those platforms. In addition, the research results clarify that NPOs struggle with creating content for social media, which is caused, among other things, by the new GDPR.
Those results were the base for developing a framework, which supports the cooperating organization and similar ones with their social media and stakeholder strategy.
Nevertheless, a future study would be helpful, which would examine the implementation of the framework for improving the various recommendations. Additionally, more justifications can be developed to support with producing and publishing social media content in an ethically and legally harmless way.

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