How Digital Communication Supports Public Campaigns: A Theoretical Approach

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Abstract

This study investigates the integration of digital strategies in non-profit organizations' public campaigns. It revolves around three central themes; enhancing digital visibility, tailoring content to user expectations, and facilitating online interaction. The research underlines the importance of a sophisticated approach in digital communication, advocating for its strategic alignment with the broader goals and editorial direction of the organization. While acknowledging the pivotal role of digital tools in contemporary communication, the study stresses the irreplaceable value of face-to-face interactions. Proposing the concept of a '2.0 event,' which merges traditional and digital communication elements, the research suggests a balanced approach. This method aimed at maintaining the core human element in public campaigns, while effectively utilizing the expansive reach and dynamic nature of digital communication. Ultimately, this paper emphasizes the importance of harmonizing digital and traditional methods to enhance the efficacy of public campaigns in the digital era.

Keywords: digital communication; public campaigns; support strategies.

الملخص:

تستكشف هذه الدراسة دمج الاستراتيجيات الرقمية في حملات المنظمات غير الربحية العامة. تدور الدراسة حول ثلاثة محاور رئيسية؛ تعزيز الرؤية الرقمية، تكييف المحتوى مع توقعات المستخدمين، وتسهيل التفاعل عبر الإنترنت. تُبرز البحوث أهمية اتباع نهج متقن في التواصل الرقمي، داعيةً إلى مواءمته الاستراتيجية مع الأهداف الأوسع والتوجه التحريري للمنظمة. مع الاعتراف بالدور الأساسي للأدوات الرقمية في التواصل المعاصر، تؤكد الدراسة على القيمة اللازمة للتفاعلات وجهًا لوجه. تقترح الدراسة مفهوم "الحدث "2.0، الذي يدمج عناصر التواصل التقليدية والرقمية، مقترحةً بذلك نهجًا متوازنًا. يهدف هذا الأسلوب إلى الحفاظ على العنصر الإنساني الأساسي في الحملات العامة، مع استخدام فعّال للمدى الواسع والطبيعة الديناميكية للتواصل الرقمي. في نهاية المطاف، تُبرز هذه الورقة البحثية أهمية تناغم الأساليب الرقمية والتقليدية لتعزيز فعالية الحملات العامة في عصر الرقمنة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التواصل الرقمي؛ الحملات العامة؛ استراتيجيات الدعم.

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1. Introduction

The digital strategy incorporates three primary themes for associations. First, it includes the visibility of digital, asserting its presence on social media, improving natural and/or paid referencing, and dispersing referring sites. Second, digital aims for content objectives. It has to promote access to information and enhance the consistency of content with users' expectations. Content should not be underestimated as it serves as the link between visibility which is necessary and the goal of digital; conversation and exchange. The third and final objective focuses on online conversation and exchange, facilitating associations' actions towards users.

Currently, the digital world continues to revolutionize communication. While social communication struggles to find a place in society, the web has emerged as a potential solution for visibility. Through this writing, we have noticed that digital technology has evolved into a focal point within communication strategies in the social sphere. Its heightened utility is attributed to its complementary role alongside traditionally recognized communication channels.

By presenting interactive and dynamic websites, general interest organizations demonstrate transparency to different targets. Additionally, these institutions equip themselves with the means to achieve better visibility, whether through websites or social media.

2. Public Communication Campaigns Definition

Rogers and Storey (1987) define public communication campaigns as purposeful initiatives designed to inform, persuade, or motivate behaviour changes in a definite and expansive audience. These campaigns, generally conducted for noncommercial benefits to individuals or society at large, operate within a specified time period. Organized communication activities involving mass media play a fundamental role in their execution, utilizing channels like television, radio, newspapers, and digital platforms.

Distinctively, public communication campaigns focus on noncommercial benefits, seeking to improve public welfare or address societal issues. This altruistic orientation sets them apart from commercial advertising, where profit is the primary motive. Furthermore, the campaigns are characterized by their temporal dimension, typically unfolding within a specified timeframe, allowing for clear goal-setting, strategic planning, and outcome evaluation.

The effectiveness of these campaigns is amplified by the careful segmentation of the audience, ensuring that messages are tailored and relevant. This strategic targeting is particularly crucial when the objective is large-scale societal or behavioral change. Interpersonal support, often in the form of community leaders, influencers, or peer networks, complements the mass media component, reinforcing messages through personal channels.

In summary, Rogers and Storey's conceptualization outlines the intricate nature of public communication campaigns. These initiatives strategically leverage mass media and interpersonal communication to inform, persuade, and motivate large audiences toward

noncommercial benefits, enriching society. The combination of purposeful planning, targeted messaging, and multi-channel dissemination underscores the sophisticated nature of these campaigns in fostering positive societal changes.

3. History of Digital Strategy in Public Campaigns

In the contemporary era, the rapid evolution of communication media has prompted the professional world to adapt swiftly. Scholars such as Castells (2009) and Rheingold (2002) have extensively discussed the transformative impact of new media on society and organizations. In response to this paradigm shift, various communication tools have emerged, including mobile applications, flash codes, and QR codes, reflecting a digital revolution in communication practices.

With the advent of this new age, the integration of innovative communication tools has become imperative. Mobile applications, flash codes, and QR codes have gained prominence, primarily within business contexts. Notably, institutions like the CNCT have ventured into the realm of mobile applications, as exemplified by the Smoking Voice application. This application, allowing users to transform their voice into that of a smoker, serves as a creative engagement tool. However, caution is warranted, as underscored by the Smoking Voice application's shortcomings.

As advised by communication scholars like Neuendorf (2016) and McQuail (2010), the relevance of digital tools should be a cornerstone in their adoption. The Smoking Voice application, despite its novelty, lacks essential information about the institution, contact details for assistance, and guidance on smoking cessation; an oversight that diminishes its effectiveness.

The cited example emphasizes the significance of relevance in the digital sphere, particularly for non-profit organizations. The pitfalls experienced by users, such as technical issues reported online, underscore the need for meticulous attention to digital tools. This highlights the necessity for non-profit organizations to carefully embrace digital tools and formulate well-thought-out strategies to remain relevant to their target audience.

Building on this, scholars like Waters and Williams (2011) emphasize the importance of a coherent digital strategy. The examples provided highlight the dual nature of digital communication, its potential benefits, and the pitfalls if not approached strategically. Non-profit organizations, in particular, need to navigate the digital landscape with care, acknowledging that digital tools are not ends in themselves but means to achieve broader communication objectives.

To conclude this historical overview, it is essential to assert that social communication and digital strategy, while interconnected, inhabit distinct realms. Scholars like Van Dijk (2005) and Wellman (2001) have explored the human side, solidarity, and tradition inherent in social

communication. In contrast, the digital strategy operates within a constantly evolving technological landscape, where users often find themselves navigating complex interfaces alone in front of their screens. Recognizing this duality is crucial for organizations seeking a balanced and effective communication approach in the digital age.

4. Mechanism of Digital Communication in Public Campaigns

Digital technologies wield substantial influence in rallying support for public interest causes, serving as a backbone force for organizational effectiveness. Nevertheless, the realization of the full potential of digital tools within communication strategies remains an ongoing challenge for certain institutions. As Carr and Hayes (2015) assert, the information age has ushered in an era of digital abundance, presenting organizations with unparalleled opportunities and challenges.

The proliferation of information on the Internet has introduced the risk of saturation, potentially diminishing the impact of communication efforts. Research by Sunstein (2017) emphasizes that an overload of information can lead to skepticism or even outright rejection by users, as they grapple with doubts about the credibility and authenticity of the content presented. This phenomenon, commonly referred to as information overload, necessitates a careful and strategic approach in digital communication strategies to avoid disengagement or skepticism among the target audience.

Addressing this challenge requires the implementation of effective mobilization campaigns utilizing digital tools. As noted by Waters and Williams (2011), successful mobilization campaigns influence the dynamic nature of digital platforms to create engaging and impactful narratives. This involves not only disseminating information but also fostering open connections with the audience, ensuring that the content resonates with their values and concerns.

Moreover, overcoming obstacles associated with communication surrounding public interest causes is central. Maibach et al. (2010) argue that effective communication is integral to garnering support for causes that serve the public interest. Digital platforms offer unique opportunities for transparency and interactivity, allowing institutions to directly address concerns, provide real-time updates, and engage in conversations with their audience. However, utilizing these platforms requires a strategic understanding of the potential challenges and employing communication tactics that navigate complexities effectively.

Conclusively, while the digital landscape holds immense potential for mobilizing support for public interest causes, institutions have to navigate the pitfalls of information saturation. Strategic mobilization campaigns, informed by the insights of Carr and Hayes (2015), Waters and Williams (2011), and Sunstein (2017), should be implemented to address this challenge. Embracing effective communication strategies, as advocated by Maibach et al. (2010), is paramount for organizations aiming to harness the true power of digital tools in advancing public interest causes.

4.1   Originality

The sustenance of individuals' engagement in societal causes is intricately tied to the concept of originality, especially in the contemporary period marked by the ubiquity of social media and the evolution to Web 2.0. The prevalent challenge arises from the saturation of demands on individuals' attention in the digital landscape. In such a milieu, the key is not only to capture the public's attention but also to arouse their curiosity and spark a genuine interest in the advocated cause. Three indispensable criteria for success in this endeavour are the concept, novelty, and audacity.

An illustrative campaign that epitomizes these criteria is the "Strip-Tease" video clip developed by the CNCT. This campaign, characterized by its ingenuity, takes a novel approach by metaphorically undressing a packet of cigarettes to expose the alluring marketing tactics used by tobacco brands to entice young people through appealing packaging. Unlike conventional campaigns that focus solely on denouncing the health hazards of tobacco use, this initiative delves into the perils and dangers embedded in the marketing strategies employed by the tobacco industry. By shifting the concentration in such a distinctive manner, the campaign not only captures attention but also challenges the audience to reconsider their perceptions.

Originality, in this context, is not merely a creative choice but a strategic response to the overwhelming abundance of messages related to general interest causes. The constant bombardment of information can lead to weariness among individuals, causing messages to be overlooked or forgotten. The "Strip-Tease" campaign demonstrates that the more original a message is, the more likely it is to break through the noise and leave a lasting impression.

To encapsulate, originality stands as a catalyst in the sphere of digital communication, offering a distinctive edge to various causes amidst a densely populated informational milieu. It functions as an efficacious strategy to counteract the prevalent issue of message oversaturation. The "Strip-Tease" campaign initiated by the CNCT exemplifies this principle effectively. It demonstrates that an innovative and novel approach is instrumental not only in garnering audience attention but also in facilitating a deeper engagement with and comprehension of nuanced issues pertinent to public health advocacy.

4.2 Entertainment

The paradigm of "Cartoon and Play" serves as an exemplary illustration of an engaging communicative initiative. The incorporation of a song accompanied by a diverting video not only has the capacity to elicit emotional responses such as joy, laughter, or amusement but also holds the potential to raise support from the target audience. In addition to its immediate emotive impact, the song contributes to heightened message retention among individuals, constituting a polygonal tool within the communicative arsenal.

Beyond its instructive function, the overarching objective of "Cartoon and Play" lies in enveloping the public within the institutional narrative. This immersive experience serves a

dual purpose; it scatters any antiquated image associated with the institution while simultaneously fostering a profound sense of belonging among the audience. Such immersion is focal for creating a lasting connection and resonance with the public.

It is imperative to acknowledge that the integration of entertainment as a fundamental element in communication strategies for general interest causes is a strategic imperative. By adopting a playful approach, entertainment facilitates the nuanced exploration of serious and delicate subjects. Notably, laughter emerges as a potent catalyst in strengthening the audience's affinity towards the cause's values, steering clear of potentially adverse effects associated with shocking or moralizing rhetoric, which may induce weariness.

The versatility of entertainment within communication strategies is evident through its manifestation in diverse forms such as competitions, videos, and visual representations. Institutions, for instance, can harness the communicative power of illustrations, utilizing visual elements to effectively connect with individuals. A compelling example is the strategic use of a mascot by Road Safety—characterized by the creation of SAM—which, in targeting young people, exemplifies the efficacy of a mascot as a nuanced and indirect conduit for conveying messages that might be challenging to articulate directly. This strategic integration underscores the potency of entertainment in transcending traditional communication barriers and establishing meaningful connections with diverse audiences.

4.3   Physical Involvement

The instrumental role of social media in mobilizing users is evident, notably underscored by the potent phenomenon of virality. The swift dissemination of information and campaigns across online platforms has the potential to attract significant attention and engagement. Nevertheless, discernible constraints come to the forefront, particularly in the context of enduring causes. Beyond the initial surge in interest, the necessity of anticipating and sustaining subsequent actions emerges as a key consideration. In the realm of causes with a prolonged focus, depending solely on the transient buzz proves inadequate. This deficiency arises from the inherent challenge of low memorization levels among users, a consequence of the continual influx of information impeding sustained recall.

While social media introduces an innovative form of solidarity by enabling simpler and quicker access to messages, a latent risk exists in potentially confining citizen mobilization to the virtual realm. The imperative, therefore, extends beyond fleeting actions such as donations and Facebook Likes. Institutions must transcend the perception of these actions as symbolic gestures, recognizing that genuine acts of public affiliation demand a more profound and enduring commitment.

This discerning perspective aligns with the insights of communication scholars. For instance, Shirky (2008) contends that the transformative potential of social media in mobilization hinges on the transition from mere connectivity to effective coordination, emphasizing the need for

sustained engagement. Additionally, Castells (2015) stresses the importance of considering the societal impact of digital communication beyond momentary expressions of support. These scholarly viewpoints provide a robust theoretical underpinning for comprehending the limitations and imperatives associated with social media mobilization in the context of long-term causes.

4.4 The 2.0 Event at the Service of Public Campaigns

It is essential for institutions to adopt a proactive stance in the cultivation of audience engagement through active listening, the promotion of interaction, and the facilitation of dialogical exchanges. This imperative gains particular significance within the milieu of events seamlessly integrated with social media at various junctures—prior to, during, and subsequent to the event—ensuring a sustained and profound impact. This communication approach transcends conventional unidirectional dissemination of information, encapsulating a dynamic two-way exchange where audience feedback, participation, and interaction assume paramount importance.

Active listening, as a foundational component, entails a comprehensive monitoring of social media platforms to discern audience sentiments, inquiries, and responses. This vigilance enables institutions to discern the nuanced needs, preferences, and concerns of their audience, thereby informing the customization of content and interactions to resonate authentically with their constituency. This strategic approach serves to refine messaging, ensuring contextual relevance and reinforcing the reciprocal relationship between the institution and its audience.

The encouragement of interaction and dialogical engagement signifies a deliberate departure from passive communication practices. It involves the establishment of a virtual space conducive to meaningful engagement, encompassing mechanisms such as interactive polls, Q&A sessions, and participatory discussions on social media platforms. Particularly during events, the incorporation of live-tweeting, real-time updates, and interactive sessions serves to significantly heighten audience engagement and participation.

Furthermore, the integration of social media throughout the event lifecycle—pre-event, intra-event, and post-event—serves as a mechanism to perpetuate the impact beyond temporal constraints. Pre-event, social media platforms are strategically leveraged for promotional endeavors, fostering anticipation and interaction with prospective attendees. Intra-event, real-time updates and interactive features cater to the dynamic engagement of the online audience. Post-event, social media functions as an enduring platform for sustained discourse, feedback solicitation, and the elongation of the event's intellectual and thematic resonance.

Presently, let us undertake an examination of the methodologies designed to optimize and perpetuate this engagement across temporal dimensions.

A- BEFORE: Prepare and Announce the Event

The strategic planning of meetings with key stakeholders, including representatives from communication agencies and the institution itself, is an essential step in the process. The rationale behind these meetings is to foster a collective understanding of the efficacy, speed, and cost-efficiency of social media tools, especially for those who may harbor reservations about their utility. The goal is to cultivate a shared recognition of the potential these digital platforms hold.

Subsequently, upon the delineation of the communication objectives, it becomes critical to establish a coherent editorial strategy. A scattershot approach to social media presence is less effective than a focused campaign. Therefore, it is advisable to concentrate efforts on a select few platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter for broad public outreach, and YouTube for disseminating video content through the institution's channel. The decision to employ these platforms should be guided by their alignment with the event's target audience and objectives. In certain cases, particularly for events with extensive scope, the appointment of a specialized Community Manager to oversee social media communications may be warranted.

Furthermore, for institutions like Food Safety, leveraging social media to actively involve the audience in the event's planning process can be a strategic move. This could be achieved by allowing users to participate in decisions about the event's theme through hashtags, such as #YourEventFoodSafety, with options like #YourEventFoodSafetyFoodWaste or #YourEventFoodSafetyMalnutrition. Such participatory approaches not only foster user engagement but also ensure that the event resonates more profoundly with the audience. Setting clear deadlines for submissions and votes is crucial in this process.

Assuming 'Food Waste' is selected as a theme, the institution can deepen user involvement by encouraging them to contribute ideas for specific activities, using complementary hashtags like #YourEventFoodSafety and #Types Of Food Waste At HomeActivity. Additionally, creating a dedicated event website (e.g., www.youreventfoodsafety.com) can serve as a central hub for information dissemination and user interaction, further enhancing audience engagement and participation.

Implementing these strategies will enable the Food Safety institution to tailor its event more closely to the preferences and ideas of its audience. Moreover, ensuring reliable Wi-Fi and internet connectivity at the event venue will allow attendees to share their experiences in real-time, thereby reinforcing the institution's commitment to valuing and integrating user input into the event's fabric.

B. DURING: Covering the Event

After the initial setup of an event, maintaining its momentum is critical. This can be achieved by implementing interactive features such as competitions or applications that actively engage the audience. This strategy aligns with the research of Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), who

emphasize the importance of interactive elements in social media to maintain user engagement. Additionally, conducting surveys to gather audience feedback about the institution, the cause, the event, and their overall experience is essential. This approach is supported by Smith, Fischer, and Yongjian (2012), who note the value of user-generated content in understanding audience perceptions and experiences.

Moreover, the regular broadcasting of live content on social networks and a dedicated website is vital. This includes updates such as comments, photos, and videos that illustrate the event's progress. The Community Management team plays a pivotal role in this, ensuring the timely dissemination of information. This approach is in line with Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010) findings on the effectiveness of real-time communication in social media.

Encouraging participants to post content independently using the event's hashtag allows for a broader engagement, including those who cannot attend in person. This strategy not only enhances visibility but also fosters a sense of community and active participation, aspects highlighted in Smith, Fischer, and Yongjian's (2012) study on brand-related user-generated content.

Finally, maintaining a positive online environment through careful moderation of comments is crucial. This ensures that the conversation aligns with the institution's values and remains constructive, a point underscored by both Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) and Smith, Fischer, and Yongjian (2012) in their discussions on the importance of managing online interactions to uphold brand image and institutional values.

C. AFTER: Animate Communities

Following the conclusion of an event, it is fundamental for organizations like Food Safety to sustain engagement with attendees to encourage interest in future events. Publishing photos and videos on social media platforms serves to document and narrate the event's proceedings, a strategy supported by Bonsón and Ratkai (2013), who emphasize the significance of visual content in enhancing user engagement and storytelling on social media.

Additionally, evaluating the event's success is a manifold process, involving both qualitative measures, such as analyzing audience feedback and criticism, and quantitative measures, like assessing visitor numbers. This comprehensive evaluation is central for gauging the effectiveness of communication strategies on social media and identifying areas for improvement. Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, and Silvestre (2011) highlight the importance of such multifaceted evaluations in understanding the impact of social media activities.

Through these evaluations, Food Safety can demonstrate the event's success and establish its credibility in digital communication. This is especially important for convincing stakeholders who may have been initially skeptical about the value of integrating social media into event strategies. As argued by Mangold and Faulds (2009), social media's role in contemporary

marketing communication is undeniable and should be leveraged to maximize event outreach and impact.

In close, consistent communication with the audience, as recommended by Kietzmann et al. (2011), is key to building a lasting online community. By integrating traditional methods with digital strategies, Food Safety can effectively engage with stakeholders and foster collaborative efforts to combat food waste, resonating with the views of Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) on the synergy between traditional and digital media strategies.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this investigation delves into the nuanced integration of digital elements within an organization's communication strategy. It underscores the imperative to move beyond a mere inclusion of digital dimensions and instead advocates for a comprehensive understanding of how non-profit entities can effectively leverage digital tools. The study posits that a sophisticated digital strategy should not exist in isolation but rather be seamlessly integrated into a broader communication framework, functioning as a complementary instrument. Moreover, this integration should align with the overarching objectives of the institution and seamlessly assimilate into its editorial direction.

The discourse recognizes that a digital presence, far from being a mere online representation, have to be intricately woven into the fabric of the organization's identity. Importantly, the study emphasizes the preservation of the core principle intrinsic to any institution — its human impact. Amid the ever-evolving digital landscape, the significance of genuine, face-to-face interactions should not be overshadowed by virtual engagements.

The imperative for institutions lies in achieving a harmonious synthesis between digital strategies and traditional communication techniques. A pivotal proposition emerges in the form of the "2.0 event" concept, wherein a seamless fusion of non-media and digital elements becomes a viable solution for achieving this synchronization. This innovative approach signifies an evolution in communication paradigms, presenting an avenue for institutions to reconcile the digital realm with the human-centric ethos that underscores their fundamental principles.

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