

EPHILANTHROPY: THE IMPACT OF THE INTERNET & ONLINE COMMUNITIES IN
ACHIEVING SOCIAL CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

While marketing in the nonprofit sector is a growing topic in today's literature, research surrounding its effect on social change is still under development. More exploration to uncover the position of the Internet in the nonprofit marketing field will reveal its effectiveness for stimulating support and ongoing advocacy from its users. An important phenomenon for nonprofit organizations to uncover and embrace, social marketing will allow them to increase support in the online community. Focusing on animal advocacy and the virtual community of the ASPCA, this paper will help contribute to the understanding of user habits, motivations and behavioral intentions as they relate to philanthropy and promoting social capital on the Web. Through an analysis of the questionnaire provided, the study highlights both participation antecedents (involvement and received word of mouth) and participation consequences (word of mouth and donation behavior) as they relate to overall online participation. The study also looks at the level of satisfaction, as compared to user frequency and habits of the community. A methodology section is provided — including fieldwork, and implications — based on the results of the study.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASPCA	The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
CRM	Cause-Related Marketing
HSUS	The Humane Society of the United States
OC	Online Community
R&D	Research and Development
TAFA	Taking Action for Animals
WOM	Word of Mouth

“The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice”

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

INTRODUCTION

Objective

The objective of this paper is to determine the impact of the Internet and online communities for nonprofit organizations concerned with achieving social change, specifically in the animal advocacy field. This paper will aim to analyze the determinants and consequences of participation in online communities for nonprofit organizations and analyze their relationship to the promotion of social change. Philanthropy, ePhilanthropy, social marketing and word of mouth will be explained, with an emphasis placed on the impact possible for organizations that utilize the Web for nonprofit marketing purposes. Data for research was gathered from members of the ASPCA Online Community, an online forum where community members chat about animal rights, abuse prevention and other animal protection issues. An interview with a representative from the ASPCA provided supplemental information to that obtained through research.

Motivation

Motivation for this topic stems from my involvement in the nonprofit sector, where I have been a volunteer with many organizational fields, including animal therapy, child mentoring and community efforts. Aside from my passion for marketing and advertising, having worked in an ad agency for two years, I find nonprofit marketing very compelling. Understanding the link between online communities and ePhilanthropy is something of interest to me. I am passionate about this topic and hope to someday work in the marketing department for a global animal advocacy organization.

On a personal level, I hope to understand the giving habits of people who are involved in online communities, as I myself belong to the ASPCA community and believe it is a great tool for implementing change. What makes people want to belong to a social network online? What influences their decision to participate and be active with the cause? What influences contributions and what motivates these donation habits? How likely are they to refer the online community to friends and family? Does a sense of belonging play a role in the satisfaction of a virtual community and the desire to make a change?

While I am active in researching animal advocacy topics on my own time, having a place to interact with a community of people who feel as passionately about animal rights as I do gives me a sense of belonging and hope for the cause. People need tools to keep them informed of what issues are important, and giving them a chance to do so online — and for such a cause — is my motivation for this topic.

Significance

The potential impact of this project is to highlight the importance of online communities and the Internet for the nonprofit sector, as they offer great opportunities for fundraising, raising awareness and generating buzz among users (Williams 2000). Understanding online consumer behavior may help nonprofits shape their message and target more users to increase support, donations and overall awareness of their nonprofit cause.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing and communications are concepts clearly applicable in today's business world, since according to N.N. (as cited by Ackermann & Kruisman 2007), "Across all industries, 75% of marketers and non-marketers agree that marketing is far more important to corporate success than it was five years ago" (p. 1). Kotler and Roberto (1989, as cited by Bates 1991) also mention that the significance of marketing has grown more evident in the nonprofit field; up to 20 years ago it was rarely mentioned, while today it is an integral element of many debates that deal with the growth and development of "privately and publicly financed nonprofit organizations" (p. 108).

These days, the business world can be divided into many categories, including for-profit and not-for-profit (also called nonprofit) companies and organizations. Nonprofit organizations are those organizations that are created to serve a public or shared benefit *other* than that of profit for its owners and/or its investors (www.learningtogive.org). There are approximately 1.2 million organizations registered with the IRS as nonprofit organizations, with combined revenues of approximately \$621.4 billion, which represent about 6.2% of the nation's economy (www.learningtogive.org). With the growth of the nonprofit sector in recent years, it is clear that this industry is here to stay, as shown when Ackermann and Kruisman (2007) describe the nonprofit industry as a "high-profile, high-impact community that affects the lives of people throughout the country and the world" (p. 1). Given the growth of marketing, it is understandable that marketing efforts are vital aspects of many nonprofit organization strategies, and current research must continue to shed light on this important topic.

Philanthropy & ePhilanthropy

Philanthropy can be defined as the "contributions (money, time, goods, expertise), voluntarily given to the public good, serving primarily the public good," (Schuyt et al. 2004, p. 2). In general, it deals with commitments made by people in society to promote the welfare of a variety of causes, which can include animal rights, human rights, environmental sustainability and so on. ePhilanthropy, on the other hand, is the use of the Internet for philanthropic purposes (www.ephilanthropy.org).

In 2006 — in the U.S. — online giving climbed to \$6.87 billion, up 51% from the previous year, and this growth represents donations made to small and large nonprofit organizations (Fernsler 2008). Vargas (as cited in Fernsler 2008) states, “There is a surge of interest in philanthropy and civic engagement and all people of all ages are online, representing a huge opportunity” (p. 30). Since nonprofit organizations run their organizations through the support of donations, endowments and other fundraising activities, constant efforts must be made to help keep the public aware of their operations. The Web may just be the best way to do so. Many nonprofit organizations use financial assistance and grants, strategic planning, community grass-roots activities, humane education and training opportunities, all to help communities promote social change (Schultz 2007), and the Internet can prove noteworthy in this change.

A good deal of researchers predict that, given the growth of online business, ePhilanthropy will begin to replace more “traditional” fundraising methods, which include direct mail, personal requests, telephone and planned giving (Hart 2002). Nonprofits — when involved with the Web — add a “feel good” aspect to e-commerce (Frenza & Hoffman 1999), a big factor to consider when approaching the idea of using the Internet for fundraising, a potential source of strength for many organizations. Austin (as cited in Hart 2001, p. 22) expands:

“The ePhilanthropy revolution is here to stay, and it will transform charitable giving in as profound a way as technology is changing the commercial world. Charities that have dismissed ePhilanthropy as a fad or run from it in confusion, will, sooner or later, need to become reconciled to it. If they don’t, they risk losing touch with donors and imperiling the vitality of their work.”

That being said, just as much research is conducted to contradict this statement, portrayed in a statement by Hart (2002) that reads, “Organizations that are succeeding are those that utilize the efficiency and effectiveness of Internet-based ePhilanthropy services integrated fully with traditional methods,” (p. 353). Overall, nonprofit organizations alike must embrace ePhilanthropy to stay competitive in the market, whether it means combining it with more traditional methods or embracing the essential technology on its own.

Social Marketing

The term “social marketing,” created by Philip Kotler and Gerald Zaltman in the 1970s, helps to explain the idea behind philanthropy and ePhilanthropy, as it reveals the reason for pursuing these actions. There are many different definitions regarding social marketing, as the phrase is quickly growing in prominence, showing that it allows for “messages to travel farther and faster through social ties” (Sullivan 2008, p. 24). A few definitions are highlighted below:

Kotler and Zaltman (1971, as cited in Sirgy et al. 1989) define social marketing in the following manner: “The design, implementation and control of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas, and involving considerations of product planning, pricing, communications, distribution, and marketing research” (p. 216).

“Social marketing uses marketing techniques to influence the voluntary behavior of target audience members ... it goes beyond informing or persuading people to reinforcing behavior with incentives and other benefits ... the people who gain from it are members of the target audience” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2005).

According to the Social Marketing National Excellence Collaborative (2006), social marketing is “The use of marketing principles to influence human behavior in order to benefit society” (p. 4). Further descriptions of social marketing state: “It is a social or behavior change strategy, which is most effective when it activates people and is targeted to those who have a reason to care and who are ready for change” (p. 5).

Weinreich (2006) describes social marketing as a term “differing from other areas of marketing only with respect to the objectives of the marketer and his or her organization” (p. 1).

Andreasen and Drumwright (2000) state that, “Social marketing is charged with dramatic goals” (p. 1), and these goals can be found in the mission statements of many nonprofit organizations. Some examples of mission statements of well-known nonprofit companies include:

“To fight hunger through community partnerships.” (*Second Harvest Heartland*)

“To advance the power of individuals to take informed and compassionate action to improve the environment of all living things.” (*The Jane Goodall Institute*)

“To wish children of the past, present, and future will have an opportunity to share the power of a wish.” (*Make a Wish*)

“To increase public and professional awareness about the prevention, detection, and treatment of skin cancer.” (*The Skin Cancer Foundation*)

“To provide effective means for the prevention of cruelty to animals throughout the United States.” (*ASPCA*)

More examples of mission statements for nonprofit organizations can be found at: www.missionstatements.com.

As far back as the 1960s, Kotler and Levy (1969) mention the evolution of marketing as a concept, as they write, “Marketing is a pervasive societal activity that goes considerably beyond the selling of toothpaste, soap and steel” (p. 10). The authors go on to say that fundraising is a reminder that even “causes” are marketed, which showcases this societal activity as just that: social marketing. Given the growth of organizations in the U.S. performing “society’s work,” the influence of nonprofit organizations can certainly grow, but they face some of the same obstacles that a traditional business organization faces. For those nonprofit organizations heavily involved in social marketing, their main focus should be to “Find effective ways to make a little money go a long way” (p. 11).

In short, social marketing is the implementation of programs whose aim is to bring about social change using commercial marketing concepts (Social Marketing Institute 2008), and while this is truly possible, the ever-evolving concept of marketing will surely bring about its own challenges.

Measuring the Value of Social Marketing

Measuring the success and/or value of social marketing is an important aspect of the nonprofit business world, although this can be a tricky and lengthy process. Not everything can be measured, since not all people who are involved with a cause will donate. Therefore, there exist many intangible outcomes when speaking of social networks and marketing. Making sure that the number of supporters increase over time is sometimes *all* a nonprofit organization can do when it comes to calculating the amount of buzz surrounding a marketing campaign. Some of the metrics that are available include new list names and donations, the amount of donations, the number of subscribers and the frequency of people who repost content onto another site (TAFAs 2008). While it may be hard to measure, the value of social marketing is due, in part, to an efficient channel of communication in place to help deliver marketing messages to consumers (McGovern 2007). It may also depend on the ability of the social marketing message to provide distinctive and useful direction to people who are involved in promoting the specific social cause (Leathar & Hastings 1987).

Social marketers believe that value can be measured through the “quality-of-life theory” (Sirgy et al. 1985), which differs greatly from the value one derives from market demand. After all, social marketing organizations focus more on ideas and causes than for-profit organizations do, which warrants a different outlook on value.

Marketing Principles

While it is quite similar to the traditional (commercial) forms of marketing, social marketing refers to social behaviors that are aimed not at benefiting the marketer, but instead the general society. Perhaps more specifically, the intention is to target a predetermined group of people in the market (Weinreich 2006). Much like commercial marketing, “the primary focus is on the consumer — on learning what people want and need” (Weinreich 2006, p. 1). This is the biggest difference between traditional marketing and social marketing: one serves the business and the shareholders, while the other aims to benefit the cause for which it was created.

As Kotler and Levy (1969) focus mainly on the marketing characteristics of a “traditional” business organization, they mention the need of *all* organizations to call attention from certain “consumers” to their “product” in order to find “tools” to further their

acceptance in the market. In the case of this paper, the “consumers” are the target market; the “product” is the cause of the nonprofit organization; and the “tools” are the Web and more specifically, online communities. The most important part of the equation is the “product,” as this element “Can take on many forms, and ... is the first crucial point in the case for broadening the concept of marketing” (Kotler & Levy 1969, p. 12).

The Four Ps of Marketing

Although the “Four Ps of Marketing” (product, price, place and promotion) are well-known in the business world, briefly touching upon each aspect of this formula will help to highlight their relationship with social marketing and explain the additional Ps that exist in that sector. The Social Marketing National Excellence Collaborative (2006) defines the “Four Ps of Marketing” as the “domains of influence to consider when planning intervention activities for reaching a target audience from multiple perspectives” (p. 13).

Product traditionally refers to the physical and tangible offering to a consumer. In a social marketing context, however, products serve as *intangible* ideas (Weinreich 2006) and include categories such as environmental protection, children’s rights or — in this case — animal advocacy. These ideas essentially serve as the “problem” (i.e., animal abuse) that exists for a product to “fix” (i.e., saving animals, speaking out against animal abuse, etc.). It is important for organizations to understand the perceptions of the consumer towards the problem, so they know how important it is for the consumer to help support (and take action) against the problem (Weinreich 2006).

Price is simply the value attached to a product, which will vary from market to market. Generally speaking, the higher the price assigned to a product or service, the higher the perception of value from the viewpoint of the consumer. The opposite also holds true: The lower the price, generally the lower the perception of value. In terms of social marketing, the cost to the consumer is not necessarily monetary but again intangible, in terms of time or effort (Weinreich 2006). While it varies slightly from traditional pricing ideals, the benefits to the consumer must still outweigh the costs, so that the option is appealing to the consumer. If being a member of an online community takes time and effort, the end result of the effort must be worth it for the value to hold true.

Place is the way in which a consumer obtains a product or “The mechanism through which goods and/or services are moved from the manufacturer/service provider to the user or consumer” (www.marketingteacher.com). Tangible products are moved through a distribution system, which can — at times — include many various means of movement. For intangible products, included under the social marketing category, *place* simply deals with decisions about how consumers should receive the intended message or information. An online community serves this purpose by bringing together a category of people (previously determined) who have accessibility to a network and want to belong to a community surrounding a certain topic, while working towards a similar goal. Once again, in this case, the topic is animal rights and the outcome desired is positive change.

Promotion is used to generate attention around and demand for a product, using advertising, personal selling, public relations and many other vehicles to reach the consumer. As Weinreich (2006) states, “Research is crucial to determine the most effective and efficient vehicles to reach the target audience and increase demand” (p. 2). This can also be applied to social marketing, since an organization must promote its cause to the target market in order to get a level of interest in its activities. Publicity for nonprofit organizations is especially important, but it must be created in a positive manner in order to truly reach the intended public.

Social Marketing Ps

According to Weinreich (2006), in addition to the standard marketing mix, social marketing creates its own “Ps,” which are described below:

- *Publics*: These are the groups of people involved in a cause, including both internal group members (those making the approvals and implementing the changes) and external group members (target audience, policy makers). It is essential for organizations involved in social marketing to ensure that their goals are met, which can only be realized when all of their intended group members are reached.
- *Partnership*: Some nonprofit organizations choose to partner with other companies, whether they are for-profit or nonprofit, to strengthen their overall cause. For-profit

— or commercial companies — can further strengthen the nonprofit cause, as they often have access to more capital than not-for-profit companies would. Having the money to back up a campaign is key for many organizations, and today it is more common to see a nonprofit team up with a for-profit, as Weeden (1998, cited in Andreasen & Drumwright 2000) explains: “The relationship for social marketers has shifted from begging to partnering” (p.14). To be truly effective, however, the partnership must be based on similar goals, or it can prove very difficult to work together. This partnership, referred to as a “social alliance,” can be described as an agreement (formal or informal) between a nonprofit organization and a for-profit organization, with the intention of implementing a marketing plan over a specified amount of time (Andreasen & Drumwright, 2000).

- *Policy:* While Weinreich (2006) states, “Social marketing programs can do well in motivating individual behavior change” (p. 2), the overall environment surrounding the cause must be supportive in order for success to be possible. The more public support for the organization, the stronger the policy changes and effects can be.
- *Purse Strings:* This simply refers to the sustainability of the organization and its cause through foundation support, grants and donations. Without this financial backing, many organizations cannot pursue social change.

Social Change

According to the Interaction Institute for Social Change (2007), the mission of social change is “to ignite and sustain social transformation, catalyze collaborative action, and build collaborative skill to bring alive the vision of a just and sustainable world” (www.interactioninstitute.org). Social marketing is the framework used for achieving social change (Deshpande & Lagarde 2008), as it helps to give new viewpoints into communication, innovation, and social research and development (R&D). In this case, social R&D includes social programs, services and ideas, among a spectrum of other marketing concepts (Sirgy et al.1989).

The social change theory is one that has emerged out of interest and it should continue to develop, as it helps provide understanding of both cooperative and conflictual social

processes (Hudson 2000). It is imperative for nonprofit organizations to understand this development because it uncovers the thought process of online community members and may help motivate organizations to reach people in a new dimension. When the behavioral implications for social change are implicit, the possibilities for social impact are that much more defined and possible. Maintaining the shared vision and strategies for coordinated action is imperative at this stage (Interaction Institute for Social Change 2007).

Social Capital

Social capital is an important aspect not only in sociology and its theory, but also within social change, which highlights its relation to this paper. Social capital relates to the idea that “the involvement and participation in groups can have positive consequences for the individual and the community” (Portes 1998, p. 2). Preece (2002) defines social capital as “the glue that holds communities and other social networks together” (p. 37). The concept of social capital focuses on the positive consequences of sociability (within a community) and the source of power and influence that comes with it. Bourdieu (1985, p. 248, as cited in Portes 1998, p. 3) defines the concept as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition.” Essentially, this definition focuses on the benefits to individuals who participate in groups, as opposed to those who do not. It breaks down the idea of social capital into two parts: the nature of the social relationship (which involves the idea of accessibility to resources) and the amount and quality of the resources noted above (Bourdieu 1985, as cited in Portes 1998, p. 4).

Burt (1992, p. 9, as cited in Portes 1998, p. 6) describes social capital as follows: “Friends, colleagues, and more general contacts through whom you receive opportunities to use your financial and human capital.” Overall, social capital is the ability of individuals (who are part of a bigger community) to “secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures” (Portes 1998, p. 6). Relationships (access to resources) and motivation (making resources available) is the main idea behind social capital. While understanding that the motivation of donors in a nonprofit organization is an involved process, it is essential to understanding social capital as a concept. After all, most people (donors) who make a contribution to an organization are doing so without expecting anything back in return. This idea of reciprocity — discussed by Kobayashi et al. (2006) — describes

the desire of people to help one another and exchange things with others for a mutual benefit, even if the person they are helping are not the ones that end up giving back to them. Reciprocity helps to maintain a sense of positivity and cooperation, which are all part of the daily communication in a social network. The more social exchanges that take place, the more people will want to help each other. Reciprocity also increases when postings made online are answered (Kobayashi et al. 2006). However, it must be mentioned that a balanced form of reciprocity is only possible when the balance occurs within the group, as it is hard to find that balance with an individual (Wang & Fesenmaier 2003).

Portes (1998) writes that people who are in the same social network who also identify with one another are more likely to support each other and the cause that brought them to the network in the first place. When an individual is able to identify him or herself with their own community of beliefs, the social organization becomes a powerful force of motivation and helps to “facilitate action and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putnam 1993, p. 35, as cited in Portes 1998, p. 18). Working together in a community is much easier when that community has a substantial amount of social capital available for its operations, as communication and collaboration help to strengthen society. Social capital can be measured by the level of involvement of each individual and the behavior they demonstrate while in the community.

The Internet (especially online communities) has helped enrich the idea behind social capital, although a challenge arises when making sure that human needs are still met. Social capital online is augmented by the involvement and participation in online communities (Kobayashi et al. 2006), where trust is a key factor that must be maintained. While new software helps to unite Web users in the pursuit of common goals, community leaders are still the ones who should be responsible for encouraging collaboration, cooperation and trust, for these are the things that make a community successful (Preece 2002). “Social accounting metrics” are the factors that help determine how successful a community really is and include everything from a measuring tool to show response time (for answering questions posted on social network site) to postings by community members (Preece 2002, p. 38). Much like financial capital, social capital helps to sustain a community and therefore trust must be maintained at all times. Social capital is essentially equal to the trust of community members combined with their willingness to collaborate, and online communities give members a way to do just that; collaborate.

Online Communities

Online communities (also called virtual communities) are creeping up everywhere, as the Web gives new meanings to consumer interactions, both between each other and directly with companies or organizations. Although Leimeister et al. (2006) mentions the absence of a common definition for virtual communities, one manner in which they can be described is as follows: “Social aggregations that emerge from the Internet when enough people carry on public discussion long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyber-space,” (Davies 2007, p. 280). These communities are often characterized as noncommercial and socially motivated concepts, and often they “offer a multitude of values” (Mahadevan 2000, p. 10) by bringing together people of common interests. As the Internet reduces the aspects of physical appearance and distance, online communities provide a neutral environment where people of different backgrounds can come together (McKenna & Bargh 2000, as cited in Kobayashi et al. 2006).

With such growth potential in the e-market, nonprofits must stay ahead of this technology if they want to sustain their current supporters and gain new followers, as online social networks are appearing everywhere and are expanding at a rapid rate, according to Sullivan (2008). Weisman (as cited in Sullivan 2008) adds the statement, “As social networks grow, companies’ marketing dollars would be better spent planting a seed in an online community” (p.15). However, marketers must also keep in mind that people who joined an online community did so because it was non-commercial, so this must be maintained. Schultz (as cited in Sullivan 2008) adds, “they’re social networks, not commercial networks” (p. 16). The main goal of online communities, after all, is more about learning about and understanding consumers, rather than marketing to them (Jarvis 2001). There must be a balance between these two aspects.

While traditional communities still exist, the Web offers more opportunities for rapid business, as Rigby (cited in Snoddy 2007) explains, “Epinions can travel faster than a natter over the fence ... and more importantly, they have permanency” (p. 2). Virtual communities help bring together people who have common interests (Mahadevan 2000) and involvement in a group creates a feeling of belonging, which helps push the idea of philanthropy, civic duty, stewardship and social responsibility for society (Schuyt et al. 2004). They go on to explain that “People feel more involved with a group they are able to contribute to, and hence, will endorse the norms of this group more strongly” (p. 3), which indicates that online

communities are not only a way of making people feel part of a cohesive group, but also feel more inclined to promote the group and possibly its cause.

It is not enough, however, for organizations with an online community to simply look at how often their visitors access the site, but also the level of engagement in the community that the customer has (Karpinski 2007). This is the biggest challenge, according to Sterne (as cited in Karpinski 2007) who says, “If you only care about how many people come to your site, that’s a thing of the past ... now, it’s what their behavior looks like on your site that’s important” (p. 19). While this idea surely applies to the commercial aspect of marketing, the nonprofit sector should also take notice of this revelation and understand that it is important to track their online community members. These actions are just as relevant for the cause as are the actions of general consumers for the for-profit businesses.

While the growth of online communities is flourishing and the positive effect on business is apparent, not all nonprofits have embraced the Internet and its possibilities of communication, for the belief that the cost is too substantial. In some ways, however, it can prove to be *more costly not* to take advantage of this “largely untapped source of revenue,” according to Atlas (2005, p. 25). When assessing the costs and benefits to online communities, one must have in place methods of evaluation, measures of success, and guidance about how to improve the online experience for its users (Preece 2002). While there is still little data to truly answer the question of costs associated with online communications, there are studies that have established benchmarks for evaluation, including the eNonprofit Benchmarks Study, the Online Marketing (eCRM) Nonprofit Benchmark Index™ Study and the donorCentrics™ Internet Giving Benchmark Analysis (Matheson et al. 2007). All three studies cover advocacy, fundraising, messaging and Web statistics in a different way; however, the following conclusion can be made: “The Internet is the place for nonprofits to invest” (Matheson et al. 2007, p. 1). Below is a summary of the shared findings between all three studies:

- *Online giving is on the rise:* It is apparent that the amount of money available for nonprofit organizations to raise online is increasing, with the growth of average donation amounts rising with each year.

- *Rapid response pays:* Any “rapid response” by nonprofit organizations (by following a recent crisis or news topic and taking initiative to make a change for the cause) is recognized in the online community by a rise in donations.
- *E-mail lists are growing:* E-mail list sizes are growing in nature, which means more access to more people. The studies also show that the bigger the lists, the more money and more action are available and/or generated.

The studies also gather results related to the importance of the Web and how online donors differ from those who are offline (contacted through direct mail or “traditional” forms of philanthropy”). Among the results are facts that show online donors fill a much younger age group with a higher income than offline donors and tend to give higher amounts of money with each donation and over a longer time period than offline donors (Matheson et al. 2007). The results also show (from 16 client Web sites) that most online sites receive an average of over 20,000 new visitors per month and have experienced a growth rate of 30% in new web visitors each year (Matheson et al. 2007). This statistic is also reflected in the increase in members of the ASPCA Online Community, where member numbers jumped from around 7,000 members to over 12,000 members in just four months, from May 2008 to August 2008 (www.aspc.org). Clearly, the Web is the way to go for nonprofit organizations, given the pattern of growth previously mentioned.

Atlas (2005) mentions the following ways to use the Internet in the most advantageous manner: thinking of the business as a “business with a cause,” being flexible, building and maintaining a Web site, attracting the target market to the site, making the concept “stick,” and finally, maximizing e-mail. Each idea is briefly outlined below:

- *“Business with a cause”:* Instead of thinking of a nonprofit organization as just that, organizations should think like a for-profit business, to ensure that the choices they make for their organization are appropriate. More importantly, for a nonprofit organization to realistically assess “the impact of their activities on the consumers” (Kotler & Levy 1969, p. 13), they must have the understanding that they are in marketing, regardless of what they are pursuing. This understanding helps align their goals with the needs of their consumers, which is aided by technology. Nowadays, technology allows organizations to grow through marketing, fundraising and

communication efforts, all over the Internet. Only organizations open to utilizing the Web, however, can take advantage of these aspects.

- *Being flexible:* Some nonprofits tend to function in a similar manner over time, merely because they feel comfortable with the traditional procedures year after year. However, many opportunities are available to those organizations that are flexible in finding new ideas for fundraising and relationships with the public.

- *Building and maintaining a Web site:* A Web site is really “the most basic and relatively low-cost tool needed to engage in e-fundraising” (Atlas 2005, p. 25). While costs are required up-front, these can be justified many times over by the constant accessibility of millions of Internet users at a given point in time. With so many people online, building and maintaining a site that allows the users to make donations any time of the day is crucial for success in this field. Meanwhile, security must be a major aspect of the Web site development, as some individuals may not feel safe making donations online. A Web site developer may be a valuable tool when it comes to securing an organization’s site.

- *Attracting target market to the site:* Once a Web site has been created and is fundraising-enabled, nonprofit organizations must make sure they link their site to the appropriate market, so their audience is properly targeted. Linking to other Web sites for further information through cause-related marketing (CRM) is a great source of fundraising for nonprofit organizations (Atlas 2005). CRM is when a nonprofit organization joins with a company to raise funds and the company promises to make a certain monetary donation each time a product is sold (Chaney & Dolli 2000). According to Grau and Folse (2007), “Today, a multitude of companies have aligned themselves with worthy causes, creating mutually beneficial relationships” (p. 20), and AnimalAttraction.com is an example of such a site. This site allows members to sign up to become a member for free, and for each day they sign on to their customizable page, Animal Attraction donates \$0.01 to the member organization of their choice. These member organizations include the ASPCA, Best Friends Animal Society, North Shore Animal League and Petfinder Foundation. For each “friend” that is referred to the site (and who also signs up), Animal Attraction donates \$1.00 to the organization of his or her choice (www.animalattraction.com). This concept of CRM

highlights the potential to drive visitors to a Web site through the relationship with another organization.

- *Making the concept “stick”*: The more often people visit a Web site, the more likely they will be to take action and potentially even donate (Atlas 2005). This may be explained in part by the “sticky applications” that some nonprofit organizations use. These are reasons for a user to return to a Web site, such as a contest, sweepstake, “tip of the day” or game. Whatever it may take for visitors to visit a site on multiple occasions, the better for the organization.
- *Maximizing e-mail*: While giving users the option of logging on to a Web site on a frequent basis is great, it is also important to ensure that the target audience is still being reached — even when they are not returning to the site as frequently as desired. This can be achieved through gathering e-mail addresses, so that communication can still occur outside of the Web site. E-mail correspondence is more cost-effective than regular mail and can also be more customized to the end-user (Atlas 2005). Of course, organizations must remember that many times people may skip an e-mail from an outside source, especially if the message is plain or if they already receive a high volume of messages per day. Therefore, it is critical that the message stands out and interests the individual for it to be effective.

To supplement the ideas outlined above, The Humane Society of the United States (2008) recommends the following for a successful social networking community:

- *Know how to measure success*: Although not everything can be measured — since not all people will donate or take action, even if very involved — it is important to make sure the number of people involved increases over time and that they are able to generate buzz about campaigns. Some metrics include the number of submissions, new members, amount of donations, frequency of donations, number of photo views and frequency of people who repost content on other sites, among others. Leimeister et al. (2006) also site the following success factors of virtual communities, as found through a Delphi study: reaching a high number of members within a short period of time, building trust among members, offering up-to-date content, appreciation of

member contributions, personalized page design according to preference of members, and building a strong trademark.

- *Don't be afraid of losing control:* The number one fear of nonprofit organizations utilizing the Web is losing control of their brand. Since users create the content, many organizations believe they lose the power to control the message. This should not be a fear, but should instead be embraced. If people are already talking about you, don't ignore it; get in on the conversation. While you may/will encounter criticism along the way, at least you will know about it upfront.
- *Get buy-in from the top-down:* Involve your organization's CEO in your operations to really ensure that people understand how important the cause is to *all* that are involved. This adds to the legitimacy of the organization and its goals.
- *Remember the key factor(s) of success:* Social networking is not the "silver bullet" (straightforward solution), as an e-mail program may still be the most important cause for success. An integrated campaign should have the social networking aspect attached to it, as all of it together is what makes an organization successful. Track both successes and failures, as they are equally important in understanding the public view of your cause.

In general, nonprofit organizations must utilize the Internet to drive up their levels of fundraising success by improving their outreach (through a strong base of online supporters), building bonds (by getting to know donors and encouraging them to interact) and by driving action (motivating users to respond by making donations) (Austin 2008). Using the Internet to raise support is crucial for not-for-profit organizations today, as Vargas (as cited in Fernsler 2008, p. 30) explains:

"Generations X and M — younger people — are the next generation of donors. They have money and they're online. Smart nonprofit organizations that want to further their cause go to where their donors are. And they are online."

While it is true that more and more nonprofit organizations are beginning to increase their online efforts, there is still much research that must be done to uncover the position of

the Internet and its effectiveness for stimulating support and ongoing advocacy. McNutt and Boland (1999), aim to explain the importance by stating that “Nonprofit scholars must examine how the nonprofit advocacy community is adopting these techniques and although the question of effectiveness has not been answered, there is evidence that successful groups are making use of these techniques,” (p. 433). This paper aims to uncover this topic and its relevance to the nonprofit sector in promoting social change among online community members. As more nonprofit organizations turn to the Web for their fundraising and advocacy work, they must continuously ask themselves: how their online program compares to others, whether their goals are reasonable for growth, and how the success of their online work can be measured (Matheson et al. 2007).

Animal Advocacy

Animal advocacy and protection came about as a social movement in the early 18th century in England and soon spread to the United States (Bekoff & Meaney 1998), where interest in the topic is growing tremendously. While it is clear that animal activism is an established field, defining animal advocacy is not as straightforward, as the term varies from one organization to another. Nevertheless, it can be said that animal advocacy is a “reformist approach emphasizing gradual improvements in animal care and a reduction of animal suffering,” as well as an “animal rights approach promoting wholesale change, including the protection of animals from being used or regarded as property by human beings” (Bresch n.d., p. 1). The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) defines animal welfare as “The compassion and respect due animals as living, responsive beings” (www.aspca.org) and also cites the inception of the Internet as the trigger for new views on animal abuse issues (www.learningtogive.org).

Relating animal advocacy to the philanthropic sector can be portrayed through the monetary donations given by Americans in 2005, which reached up to \$260 billion, a 5% jump from the previous year (Pipe 2008). Animal welfare issues amounted to \$8.86 billion and of that figure, \$3.4 billion was donated to animal-related causes (Sullivan, as cited in Pipe 2008).

ASPCA

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) was incorporated in 1866 by a special act of the New York State legislature, and today is one of the largest humane societies in the world (www.aspca.org). The ASPCA can be considered a part of the growing number of nonprofit organizations that are “turning to the Internet to improve supporter relationships, find new efficiencies in their operations, advocate issues, better inform their key publics, as well as to raise funds” (Hart 2002, p. 353).

Through the creation of a virtual community — the ASPCA Online Community — public users are given the chance to start group discussions of their own, surrounding animal rights issues, animal protection laws, abuse and more. This online interactive community was created in October of 2007, after the success of the ASPCA on MySpace showed how members loved to talk about their pets in online communities (personal communication, 2008). Today there are over 12,000 members (www.aspca.org) who use the virtual community to create personal Web pages, where they can talk with other members about animal advocacy-related issues and learn more about what the ASPCA does in their community. Though each page is created by the user and is populated with their own personal content (pet photos, quotes, discussion topics and “friend” comments, to name a few), the ASPCA posts news clippings, press releases, animal facts and ongoing events information surrounding their organization. By asking users to constantly update their online profile information, the ASPCA gives donors the chance to receive personalized information that matches their interests, a main driving force behind gaining and sustaining supporters (Austin 2006).

As previously mentioned in this paper, the mission statement for the ASPCA highlights their company goal: “To provide effective means for the prevention of cruelty to animals throughout the United States” (www.aspca.org). This statement is the core essence of the company, as it explains its values and priorities, what is important, and what should not be compromised. These aforementioned items are all part of a company’s business strategies (Aaker 2004) and by keeping these ideals in the forefront of their operations, the ASPCA can hold on to their valuable position in the non-profit marketplace, especially now that they have embraced the Internet as a tool for their consumers. The ASPCA is part of a

group of business organizations that “depend on customer goodwill for survival” (Kotler & Levy 1969, p. 13) and they have, in turn, learned how to meet their needs successfully.

HSUS

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), founded in 1954 (Bekoff & Meaney 1998) is the nation’s largest animal defense organization — with over ten million members — whose mission is to “celebrate animals and confront cruelty” as well as “to create a humane and sustainable world for all animals — a world that will also benefit people” (www.hsus.org). In 2005, The HSUS created a program called TAFAs — Taking Action for Animals — that serves as an annual conference and trade show aimed at individuals and organizations alike who are involved (or want to become involved) in the animal activism movement. Since its inception, dozens of presenters have covered important topics facing the animal protection community. Some of these include: taking animal issues to mainstream media, building an effective ad campaign, advocating for animals in the U.S. Congress, and working with law enforcement, among others (www.takingactionforanimals.org).

In the most recent TAFAs program of 2008, topics link animal rights issues to the Web and highlight how the Internet can truly transform the role of animal activism for nonprofit organizations worldwide. One topic title, “Using Web 2.0 to Advocate for Animals,” emphasizes the use of social networking and blogging to communicate with supporters in order to reach fundraising goals. Representatives from the HSUS describe social networking as “the hub for all things communication-directed” and explain how important two-way discussions are, which the Web (on its own) cannot provide. The Web, while significant, only speaks to the audience from the viewpoint of the organization and pushes out its marketing objectives through one-sided messages. Social networking provides the crucial two-way communication that is necessary for collaboration and sharing among users, as they are able to create content on their own. Users and supporters talk *with* other people who share their interests and these conversations allow for a revolutionized mode of interaction. While the figures and profiles surrounding social networking users are ever-changing, 84% of people utilize a commenting feature (public conversation and posting), 82% use a messaging feature (similar to e-mail) and 39% create content through blogs, videos and by starting new groups (TAFAs 2008). Overall, nonprofit organizations need to know how to communicate with this

type of crowd, as social networks fill the “basic human needs”; to be seen and heard, to belong or be a part of something, to connect to other people, to have hope, to help, to have ownership, and to participate. Essentially, the more a social network allows for social recognition (broadcasting support of a cause by posting donation in public profile in online community), the more people feel motivated and are made aware of the cause, which may lead to more donations (TAFAs 2008). Users nowadays desire an outlet where they can share their self-expression and rely on mediums such as social networks to influence their decision-making processes.

Another recent speech of significance this year was given by Joe Trippi, former campaign manager for Howard Dean (TAFAs 2008). Entitled “Building an Online Community and Advancing Animal Issues on the Internet,” it focuses on the Web as a new means of communication. Through the Web, people have been able to get together for a common purpose, building up a peer-to-peer network that allows people to talk to their neighbors and others all throughout the country. Trippi (2008) believes that the Internet still has the potential to “change the direction of the country” and bring about more social advancements. In terms of building up communities in the virtual world, the most important aspect to remember is linking one’s site to other blogs and other sites that have the same interests; this allows more people to connect and this will lead to more word of mouth referrals (TAFAs 2008). While Trippi believes that the U.S. is still at the beginning stages of social networking, he mentions that people *want* to be part of a community; they want to be a member, to make a change and support something. With over 300 million Americans as a potential audience, nonprofit organizations must find out how many people are animal advocates and get them to participate in the communication process. Once the audience is targeted, the virtual community must be created and must allow for easy accessibility. The so called “social glue” of the community will happen naturally, as the people were brought to the animal rights site for a reason and want to have a resource to do so. On a final note, Trippi (2008) mentions that no other medium can go global like the Web, so to truly raise awareness and achieve social change, nonprofit organizations must use the Internet to “wake up people everywhere” (TAFAs 2008).

Participation Antecedents: ASPCA Online Community

The following section deals with previous or pre-existing participation factors in the online community model, which can be found in Figure 2 (p. 43). This figure displays the hypothesized model of online community participation with the ASPCA and which factors play a role in the minds of people *prior* to joining the online community. Essentially, they are the motivating factors present when deciding to join such a virtual community; received word of mouth and involvement.

Received Word of Mouth

Word of mouth can be described as those activities that “encourage consumers to talk about a product or company to friends and neighbors, setting in motion a chain of communication that could spread through a whole market” (Mason 2008, p. 207). Word of mouth is a type of informal communication between people that helps to create strong brand images and perceptions that can be positive or negative. Internet word of mouth, sometimes referred to as “word of mouse” (Helm 2000), allows for comments to quickly reach consumers, a tool that many nonprofit organizations should begin to utilize, if they have not already.

It is hard to duplicate the “value proposition” of online communities, since a large portion of the value generated from these communities comes from the members (Hagel, as cited in Mahadevan 2000). Research indicates the importance of word of mouth as one of the most influential methods of communication in the marketplace, and finds that WOM is also perceived as *more* credible than communications that come from the marketers directly. This is because many individuals believe that WOM is passed through an “unbiased filter” (Allsop et al. 2007). In other terms, the less people trust companies, the more they put their trust in word of mouth communication, thus the importance of positive reference by consumers. The individuals who receive positive feedback from others already part of the online community decide to join if the reasons for doing so meet their needs.

Involvement

According to Grau and Folse (2007), “Involvement is considered a personal connection or bridging experience for an individual, and is often conceptualized as personal relevance (the level of perceived personal importance and/or interest)” (p. 20). Zaichkowsky

(1985) defines involvement as “A person’s perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interests (p. 342). Hupfer and Gardner’s (1971, as cited in Zaichkowsky 1985, p. 343) definition mentions involvement as “a general level of interest in or concern about an issue without reference to a specific position.” Involvement can be measured through two different levels, low and high, and consumer behavior is what is behind the idea of involvement (Engel and Blackwell 1982, as cited in Zaichkowsky 1985). Consumers can become involved with something on many different levels, whether it be a product, advertisement, marketing campaign or social network. Each leads to a different outcome and though hard to measure, through research one can see that Likert-type statements (I strongly disagree, I strongly agree) help portray the level of involvement, while the situation and the person will also determine the level of attachment, as each will be different and unique (Houston and Rothschild 1978, as cited in Zaichkowsky 1985). Petty and Cacciopo (1981, as cited in Zaichkowsky 1985) believe involvement is based on personal relevance, a statement strengthened by Greenwald and Leavitt (1984, as cited in Zaichkowsky 1985) who say high involvement in turn equals high personal relevance.

The Web has created a network that gives people the power to create, share and distribute their ideas without any outside involvement from the industry itself, which allows users to develop their own identity or “brand” (Lukas et al. 2007). People who are more involved with a cause are more likely to participate in social causes and campaigns than those people who are *not* involved (Grau & Folse 2007). Kotler and Levy (1969) mention how fundraising helps to illustrate why people contribute to a cause, whether it be to “relieve a sense of guilt” or to “feel pride” (p. 14). Whatever the reason, identifying the motives for giving in the nonprofit sector is significantly important, and fundraisers must seek to uncover the reason for involvement. This paper looks at the involvement level of participants of online communities, specifically the ASPCA Online Community, and provides a glimpse of consumer behavior as it relates to the idea of involvement.

Participation Consequences: ASPCA Online Community

While the preceding section dealt with participation antecedents, this segment focuses on the consequences of online participation, with regards to the ASPCA Online Community. The consequences explained here include the already-discussed word of mouth concept; this time the word of mouth is not that which is received but rather distributed. Donation

behavior is also a participation consequence, explained here, with a discussion of both amount and frequency.

Word of Mouth

The word of mouth concept, in this case, is very important in building and sustaining a virtual community. According to Brown et al. (2007), “Word of mouth communication is a major part of online consumer interactions, particularly within the environment of online communities” (p. 2) but even so, it is not so easy to generate it, as it is to talk about it. While WOM has become a useful channel through which to share information and will certainly continue to follow a growth pattern, in terms of importance (Keller & Berry, as cited in Smith et al. 2007), marketers still find it a challenge to identify influential individuals and connect them with the online community to “encourage WOM message movement” (Smith et al. 2007, p. 387).

Not only are online community members the ones responsible for spreading word of mouth to others, people known as “influentials” are just as important in forming the opinion of the public. Influentials are those who are “a minority of individuals who influence an exceptional number of their peers” (Watts & Dodds 2007, as cited in Allsop et al. 2007, p. 400). When people involved with the Web perceive the site itself as one of the “primary actors” in the online community of which they are a member, the community becomes — and acts as — a “social proxy for individual identification” (Brown et al. 2007, p. 2). In other words, the more involved community members are, the more they feel the site itself is a member with which to have a relationship, rather than the outlet through which ideas and goals are expressed. According to Sullivan (2008), the use of social media nowadays means that messages have the ability to travel farther and faster, especially through social ties. This is exactly how the word of mouth idea works: One person spreads word of mouth to two friends, who each pass along the message to two of their friends, who then spread to more and more people. This is especially important for Internet users, as research shows that 90% of those in online communities “moderately” or “highly” trust information from their online “friends” rather than outside opinions, which only 4% of people trust (Faves.com). In the end, engaging others in word-of-mouth marketing is the most powerful way to get people involved and is also the most trusted (TAFAs 2008).

Donation Habits

Wang and Fesenmaier's study (2003) aims to understand why online community members are willing to make contributions to their community and what their motivations are behind this behavior. They discuss the ease of communication, personality traits of each member and the level of involvement in the cause — among other characteristics — as factors that all have an impact on contribution habits. Questions to be answered include: What are the motivations for contributing? What is the relationship between members' motivation and factors/levels of contribution? In this section the focus lies on three concepts: motivation, ease of communication and social-economic status, all of which determine the degree of willingness to contribute to a social network.

- *Motivation*: Motivation will differ from person to person, as well as within the virtual community. The more attached and committed an individual is to the cause, the more motivated they will be. Personality affects online behavior, as some people — by nature — may be more active and generous in their giving habits than others (Wang & Fesenmaier 2003). This outside (offline) behavior can directly translate to inside (online) behavior and can help determine motivation dynamics. Referring back to the previous notion of involvement, one can see how members of a community may be involved in different ways and on different levels. Some people, for example, are involved in the community but may not make active contributions, while others join solely for this purpose; to be active in interaction and communication with others. Research indicates that the involvement of an individual affects the motivation to “process information, attention and comprehension processes” (Greenwald & Leavitt 1984 and Zaichkowsky 1985, as cited in Wang & Fesenmaier 2003, p. 36).
- *Ease of communication*: While motivation, as mentioned above, is needed for understanding contribution habits, it is not a sufficient condition for contribution. In other words, it does not solely determine one's contribution levels, as one must be *able* to contribute, as well as willing. If one is willing but *unable* to donate, motivation does nothing to help determine the actions. The ability to donate is based on how easy it is to interact with other people in the community; thus the ease of communication. It is easy to understand that people are less likely to interact if the virtual community is hard to use or to understand.

- *Social-economic status*: This idea determines a willingness to contribute for obvious reasons. The more a person is comfortable with their social status, as determined by their income and lifestyle, the more willing they will be to make donations. Age may also play a factor in the analysis of this factor.

In the study by Wang and Fesenmaier (2003), one of the biggest motivations to contribute was “gaining a sense of helpfulness to others” (p. 37). In the questionnaire produced for this paper, participants were asked to rank the importance of statements related to their contribution habits (those who had donated in the past). Factor analysis included three motivation phrases, as well as an open-ended statement possibility for identifying appropriate constructs. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 1, which displays the perceived importance of motivation to contribute. Of those respondents who contributed, 30% of people donated under \$25 each time. A correlation matrix incorporating the three motivation statements is reported in Table 2.

Table 1: Perceived Importance of Contribution Motivation*

Motivation to Contribute	Mean	S.D.
I wanted to make a difference for animals	4.56	0.91
I know my donation will help towards the cause	4.53	0.98
I enjoy how I feel when I donate to such a cause	4.31	0.95

**Table adapted from Wang and Fesenmaier (2003, p. 37)*

Table 2: Means, Standard Deviation (S.D.) and Correlations of Motivation Elements*

Variable	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3
1. Make a difference	4.56	0.91	1.00		
2. My donation helps	4.53	0.98	0.81	1.00	
3. Enjoy how I feel	4.31	0.95	0.87	0.74	1.00

*Table adapted from Wang and Fesenmaier (2003, p. 38)

The numbers shown reflect all cases in the questionnaire, both male and female. All motivation statements (I wanted to make a difference for animals, I know my donation will help towards the cause and I enjoy how I feel when I donate to such a cause) were analyzed using a five point Likert scale with the following number-statement representations:

Figure 1: Number representations using Likert scale

Strongly Disagree =1	Disagree =2	Neutral =3	Agree =4	Strongly Agree =5
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Figure adapted from Leimeister et al. 2006

Understanding motivations to contribute are essential to social marketing, as social capital must be maintained to ensure social ties are kept strong among members. This helps to reiterate and refresh the spirit of communication and collaboration (Preece 2002, as cited in Wang & Fesenmaier 2003), which — as previously mentioned — helps strengthen the motivation factor in community members.

METHODOLOGY

Hypotheses

People who already have a certain level of involvement in the ASPCA's cause (animal advocacy) are more likely to join and participate in an online community for the ASPCA. In other words, if someone *already* supports the cause of the organization on a certain level (this can vary from somewhat involved to extremely involved) either because they care about animals, want to help make a difference, want to talk to others about animal rights issues, or simply want to just help support the mission of the organization, they are more likely to take the next step and join the online community (Wang and Fesenmaier 2003). This idea stems from the feeling that individuals have when they are involved with a non-profit community, no matter the level. Joining an online community specifically targeted towards their desire to help animals will help to fulfill a moral and social need, furthering their believed ability to make a difference. Having a chance to be involved directly with others who support the same mission allows for an organized sense of community, which only stands to strengthen the desire to be involved. More formally,

H1: The higher the involvement with the cause, the higher the level of participation in the online community.

Received WOM is a behavior that leads individuals to join the ASPCA Online Community. The higher the WOM to which an individual is exposed, the more likely they are to join the online community. Understandably, if a person is unaware of the presence of an online community that caters to their desire to help animals, they cannot — and will not — join the community. Likewise, if a person finds out about the site from their family, friends or colleagues, they will be more likely to check it out and thus, join. Referring to the research previously mentioned in the WOM section of the paper, people trust information from their family, friends or colleagues over 'outsiders' and this trust increases if the person providing the information is already an 'inside' source (meaning they are already members themselves). Specifically stated,

H2: The higher the exposure to positive word of mouth communication relating to the online community, the more likely the individual will join the online community.

One consequence of participation is WOM. As previously mentioned, word of mouth is what initially brings users to the online community, but also plays a role in how the individual then spreads their own word of mouth to future potential members. The more involved the current individual is in the online community (which includes chats and comments, the frequency of their participation and the groups of which they are members), and the more satisfied they are with the experience and the overall site itself, the more likely they are to recommend it to a family member, friend or colleague. In view of above, the following hypothesis states,

H3: People who sign in to the online community more spread more WOM than those who do not sign in as frequently.

The next idea aims to analyze the donating aspect of participation consequences. In this case, we look at the rate at which community members sign in to the ASPCA Online Community and look at the relationship between this and the donation behavior. This donation aspect is twofold, as it deals with donation behavior as well as intention. While an individual may have a desire to donate (intention), they may not actually follow through with this feeling (behavior), for reasons that may include a financial situation, fears associated with making donations online, or the belief that a small donation will not make a big enough difference in the cause. Donation behavior, on the other hand, deals with the follow-through of the individual who has the desire to donate. This ability to donate is then transferred into action and can be described through both the amount of each donation, as well as the frequency of donations to the cause, over time. The stronger the intention to donate, the more likely the individual will donate. Likewise, the stronger the donation behavior, the stronger the likelihood the amount and frequency will increase over time. More formally,

H4: People who sign in to the online community more frequently will donate more (in amount and frequency) than those who do not sign in as frequently.

People who join the online community utilize it in different ways, according to motivation factors. The frequency of chats and comments, how often they sign in to their page and interact, and how many groups they belong to or start themselves all have a direct impact on how satisfied they are with the community. Being involved in the interaction

aspect of virtual communities allows people to come together with similar interests and the user who is more involved is more aware of the ongoing benefits to the community. This online participation helps shape the feelings of the user towards the site and its members, leading to a level of satisfaction not otherwise found in users who are not as involved. That said, the following hypothesis can be made:

H5: The more people participate in the online community, the more satisfied they are with the community.

Overall, my hypotheses surround the idea that people who *are* involved in a virtual community are more likely to endorse philanthropy and social responsibility than those who are *not* involved. This can be related to the cohesion idea, where an integration of people fosters a feeling of well being for society overall. More support for the cause means more support for the organization, leading to increased awareness and further donations to the cause. Younger generations are more likely to embrace online communities, so perhaps their feelings towards the organization cause them to spend more or have higher perceptions of the overall efforts produced by the organization. However, younger members of the community will not have access to income in the same manner that the older members may, so this must be kept in mind. Figure 2 (p. 32) portrays the hypothesized model of online community participation.

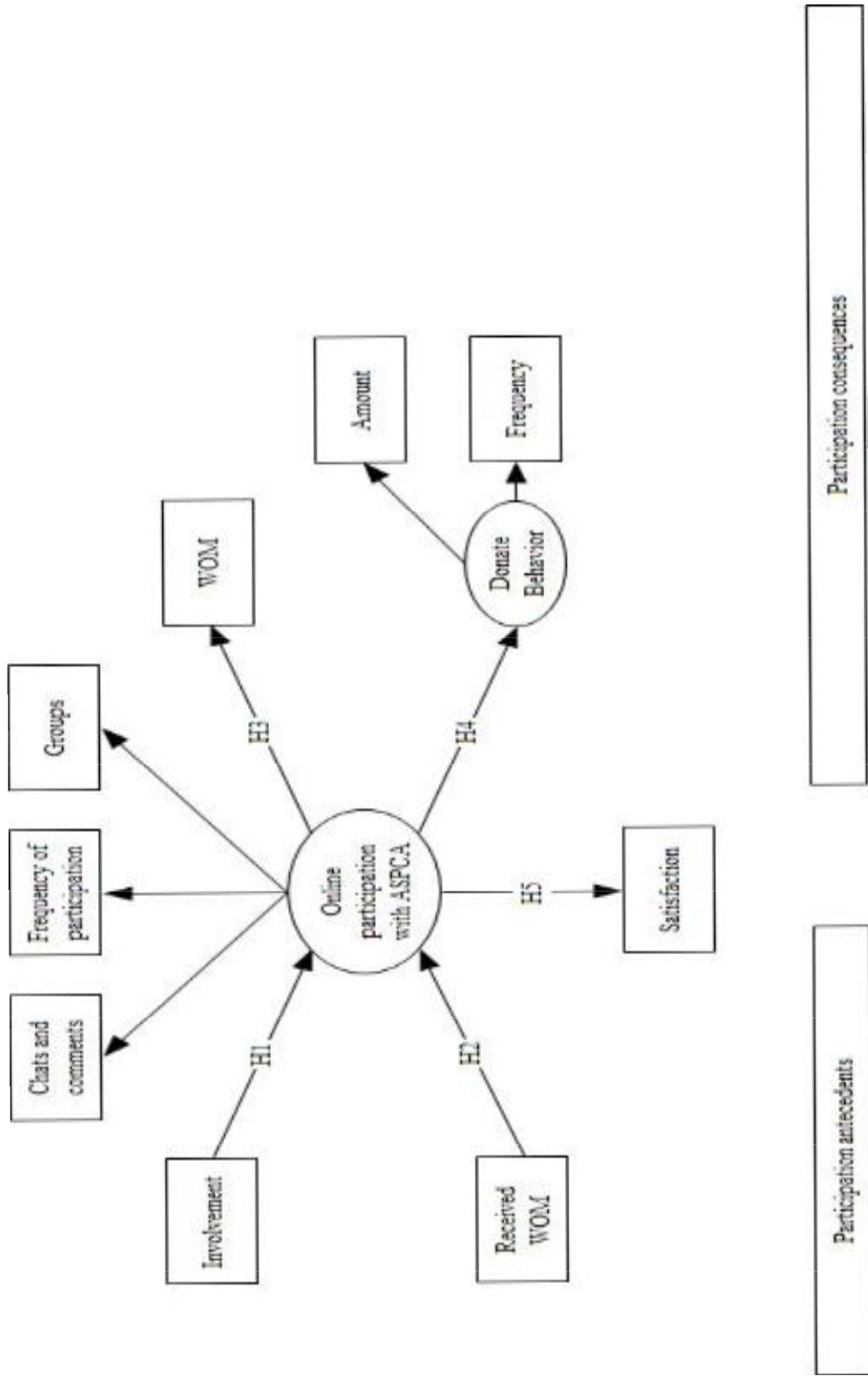


Figure 2: Hypothesized model of online community behavior

Measures

Analysis was based on primary data obtained from the ASPCA Online Community. A questionnaire was created and administered through the ASPCA Online Community, for which access to information and consumer perceptions were comprehensive. The questions from the survey presented in Appendix A (p. 64) represent the anonymous survey administered to — and answered by — members of the ASPCA Online Community. Sections of the questionnaire included membership, donation habits and satisfaction, with the last two sections dealing with miscellaneous factors and user demographics.

Table 3 portrays the measurement scales for the variables that can be found in Figure 2 (p. 32). Each variable included in the aforementioned model is itemized according to each construct and shows how the variables were measured.

Table 3: Measurement Scales

Construct	Construct dimensions	Item coding	Item descriptions	Source
Involvement	<i>Reason for joining</i>	Q3.1	I wanted to be a part of an online community that helps animals.	Own
		Q3.2	I wanted to help make a difference for animals.	
		Q3.3	I believe being a part of an online community brings us closer to the cause (of helping animals).	
		Q3.4	I like meeting new people who have the same interests as me.	
		Q3.5	I wanted to learn more about the ASPCA.	
		Q3.6	I am a part of many online communities, so this was just one more to join.	
	<i>Length of membership</i>	Q1	Approximately how long have you been a member of the ASPCA Online Community?	
	<i>Level of involvement since joining</i>	Q17	Since joining the ASPCA Online Community, would you say you are more involved with the cause, less involved, or the same?	
Received WOM		Q2	How did you hear about the ASPCA Online Community?	Own

Table 3. cont.

Satisfaction	<i>General</i>	Q14.1	I find that my thoughts and opinions (when expressed) are generally accepted by this online community.	Own
		Q14.2	I find that my thoughts and opinions (when expressed) are generally respected by this online community.	
		Q14.3	I feel I have learned a lot more about the ASPCA by being a member of this online community.	
		Q14.4	I really enjoy being part of this online community.	
	<i>Level of satisfaction</i>	Q15	Generally speaking I would say that my level of satisfaction with the online community is (very low, low, neutral, high, very high).	
Online participation with ASPCA	<i>Frequency of participation</i>	Q4	Approximately how many days during a 7-day week do you visit (sign-in) to the ASPCA Online Community?	Own
	<i>Chats and comments</i>	Q5	Approximately how often do you post comments on the ASPCA Online Community page?	
	<i>Groups</i>	Q6	Approximately how many groups do you belong to on the ASPCA Online Community?	
		Q7	Of the groups you belong to on the ASPCA Online Community, approximately how many of them did you start yourself?	
WOM	<i>Friend referral</i>	Q8	Since joining the ASPCA Online Community, have you referred any friends to the site? How many?	Own
		Q9	What is the likelihood you would recommend the ASPCA Online Community to friends or colleagues?	

Table 3 cont.

Donate Behavior	<i>Frequency</i>			Own
		Q10	Since joining the online community, approximately how many times have you donated money to the ASPCA?	
	<i>Amount</i>	Q11	If you have donated to the ASPCA since joining the online community, approximately how much have you given each time?	
	<i>Factors for donating</i>	Q12.1	I wanted to make a difference for animals.	
		Q12.2	I enjoy how I feel when I donate to such a cause	
		Q12.3	I know my donation will help towards the cause.	
	<i>Factors for not donating</i>	Q13.1	I don't feel secure making a donation online.	
		Q13.2	I don't feel like my small donations will make a difference.	
		Q13.3	At this time, financially, I cannot commit to making a donation.	

Fieldwork

The method of implementation began with a general message sent to my “friend” community on the ASPCA Online Community page. This message asked group members for their help in participating in a questionnaire for research purposes, specified as an MBA thesis research project. A brief outline of my research topic, objective and question categories was provided, after which all members were given a link to an online questionnaire. This online questionnaire, created through Survey Monkey (an online questionnaire development site), was emailed to respondents (within the community email system) and asked them for their overall perceptions of the site, their level of satisfaction with the community and the participation and donation habits that reflected their level of support. Knowing what consumers are doing online is information that is of course important, but as stated in Sullivan (2008), “the next logical step is to figure out what motivates them — and what keeps them coming back,” (p. 24). In order to get a large reach of respondents for my data collection, as an incentive to fill out the survey, a promise to donate \$1 to the ASPCA for each survey that is completed for my research (up to a pre-determined amount of \$100) was initially communicated. The only requirement for participation in the survey was to be a member of the ASPCA Online Community, on which the main topic focused. No other

demographic factors were chosen for participation, as members regardless of age, gender, education level, job status or pet ownership were entitled to respond to the questionnaire.

An individual from the ASPCA marketing department served as a point of contact for additional campaign and organization information. This source —upon permission — answered various questions pertaining to the ASPCA and the launch of its online community, member process and habits. Information provided was utilized in conjunction with my data collection from my questionnaires and helped to bring me further to my research question, aim and hypotheses.

Sample

The study is based on a sample of 44 ASPCA Online Community members, where 38 were available for analysis after sorting out the incomplete survey responses. Of the total 38 respondents, 34 are female and 4 male. The average age of respondents is in the 41-50 age range, with 13.2% under 18. The next highest responses puts people in the 22-25, 26-30 and 51-60 range. A majority of individuals (44.7%) have completed their High School/GED level of education, whereas only 2.6% are graduates with a Master's degree.

Data collection occurred between July and August 2008, and all subjects are ASPCA Online Community members who were notified through e-mail to visit the online questionnaire, for which a link was provided. The questionnaire was designed to meet the needs and uncover the habits of the targeted audience by asking various membership, donation, usage and demographic questions.

Before administering the questionnaire, its contents and functionality were tested by the ASPCA, although they were not officialy affiliated with this survey.

RESULTS

Results are mentioned below, in relation to each corresponding hypothesis.

Results of Hypothesis 1

As Table 4 shows, people who joined the ASPCA Online Community to be part of a community, and people who enjoy meeting new people are the ones who are most likely to sign-in more often. These levels are the highest among the indicators. Previous research mentions that the involvement desires of individuals who join communities portrays how active they are outside in their communities. Usually speaking, the more involved outside of the online community, the more involved they will be when online as well (Wang & Fesenmaier 2003). It is hard to distinguish whether the respondents are involved in their communities (outside of the virtual community) when they sign in, but it is clear that the reason they do so is to meet people and be part of the community-type setting.

However, hypothesis 1 can only be partially accepted, as interestingly enough there is not a strong relationship between the cause (including making a difference for animals, being closer to the cause and wanting to learn more about the ASPCA) and the number of times members sign-in to the community. Although the highest response count for the reasons behind joining the ASPCA Online Community occurred in the option “I wanted to make a difference for animals” (with 33 respondents giving a “strongly agree” answer), this does not have an effect on the amount they participate once they are members of the community; it seems people participate more to simply talk to new people and be part of the community.

Table 4 (Hypothesis 1): Relationship Between the Degree of Involvement and the Frequency of Participation in the Online Community

Involvement Indicator	Frequency of Participation (# Times sign-in)
Be part of an online community	.634**
Make a difference for animals	.358
Be closer to the cause	.355
Like meeting people	.400**
Want to learn more about the ASPCA	.256

Gamma coefficient.

*p<.10; **p<.05; ***p<.01

Results of Hypothesis 2

Interestingly enough, only a few members heard about the ASPCA Online Community through word of mouth. A total of 34 out of 41 people (82.9%) found out about the virtual community through browsing the Web on their own, while the remaining 7 respondents (17.1%) joined because of the received WOM, either from co-workers, friends or family. The respondents who found out about the community on their own did so in newsletters from and TV spots by the ASPCA, or through the ASPCA Web site. This shows that the received WOM is not as strong in this case as in other online communities, perhaps proving that the other methods of member attraction (social marketing efforts of ASPCA) are stronger and more influential.

Results of Hypothesis 3

Table 5 (Hypothesis 3): Relationship Between the Frequency of Participation in the Online Community and Word of Mouth.

Word of Mouth Indicator	Frequency of Participation (# Times sign-in)
Referred to somebody (Yes/No)	-.091
Number of friends referred	.055

Gamma coefficient. * $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$

Hypothesis 3 cannot be accepted, as Table 5 shows. People who sign in more frequently (number of days per week) are not spreading more WOM than the remainder of people who do not sign-in as frequently. Although most respondents sign-in between 4-5 and 6-7 days a week, they are not partaking in word of mouth referrals any more than those who only sign-in once a week or 2-3 days a week. This relates to the manner in which people are learning about the ASPCA Online Community; most are not receiving WOM feedback that contributed to their joining the site, they are instead seeking out the information on their own. Of the respondents, 65.9% have referred friends to the site, but this does not relate directly to the amount of times they are signing-in to the community.

Results of Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 generated interesting results, as it shows that the people who sign-in to the online community more frequently are not donating more than those who are signing-in *less* frequently. The age column of Table 6 shows the age variable, which portrays the idea that contributions are positively related to age. This can be explained by the idea that although people may be more involved by signing in more frequently, those who are younger may be *unable* to donate, due to financial reasons. This directly relates to the study by Wang and Fesenmaier (2003), who state that both ease of communication and social-economic status may have implications to donation behavior. Those respondents who are included in the younger age bracket (13.2% of respondents are under the age of 18, while 36.8% of respondents are between the ages of 41 and 50) may feel that making a contribution is difficult because of their limitations when it comes to income, or they may simply be unaware of the donation process. The younger respondents may also be of a different social-economic status, which limits their motivation (or ability) to donate.

Table 6 (Hypothesis 4): Relationship Between the Frequency of Participation in the Online Community and Donating Behavior.

Donating Indicator	Frequency of Participation (# Times sign-in)	Age
Number of times	-.282	.234
Amount donated	-.197	.386**

Gamma coefficient

*p<.10; **p<.05; ***p<.01

Table 7 (Hypothesis 5): Relationship Between the Frequency of Participation in the Online Community and Satisfaction with the Online Community

Satisfaction indicator	Frequency of participation (# times sign-in)
Satisfaction with ASPCA	.453**

Gamma coefficient

*p<.10; **p<.05; ***p<.01

Results of Hypothesis 5

As the results of hypothesis 5 above in Table 7 show, people who participate more in the ASPCA Online Community are more satisfied overall with the community. Of the total 38 respondents who answered the statement “Generally speaking I would say that my level of satisfaction with the ASPCA Online Community is...” (scale from 1-very low to 5-very high), 24 gave a response of 5, showing their high level of satisfaction with the community. 11 responded with a response of 4 (high), while only 1 gave a low satisfaction score. These responses have a positive reaction to the frequency of participation, proving that the more involved one is online (given the ease of communication with the site), the more satisfied they will be as well.

Additional key data and answers from the questionnaire are shown in Table 8, reflecting the highest response rate for selected survey questions. While most respondents are fairly new to the ASPCA Online Community, 24.4% of respondents are those who have been a member more than seven months.

Table 8: Key Data and Answers Among Members

<i>Survey Among Members</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Response Amount</i>
Average time of membership 1	Less than 1 month	39.0%
Frequency of posting comments 2	2-3 days a week & every day (both same)	24.4%
Frequency of sign-in to community 3	4-5 days a week	24.4%
Overall satisfaction with community 4	Very high	24*
Average # of groups belong 5	1-5 groups	48.8%
Approximate # of donations 6 (since joining community)	3.84	56.8%

1 Based on a scale ranging from 1 (less than 1 month) to 5 (more than 7 months)
 2 Based on a scale ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (every day)
 3 Based on a scale ranging from 1 (once a week) to 5 (more than once a day)
 4 Based on a scale ranging from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high)
 5 Based on a scale ranging from 1 (no groups) to 5 (greater than 15 groups)
 6 Based on average number of donations, calculated from open-ended responses. Response rate based on 56.8% of people donating, with 43.2% never donating.
 *Response total number of responses out of total 38 respondents who answered
 Table/Figure adapted from Leimeister et al., p. 287.

Another question from the survey not shown above asked respondents to give an (open-ended) answer to their reasoning for joining the ASPCA Online Community. Responses were deeply personal to a few of the respondents, who cited experiences with animal abuse in their own families or neighborhoods. Others wanted to “make people aware of animals and the abuse,” find people with a passion for animals or simply to see how other people who care about their animals contribute to the social cause. Overall, respondents were interested in increasing awareness of animal advocacy and the groups available to assist

people in making a substantial change for animals. 58.5% of respondents said they are “extremely likely” to recommend the ASPCA Online Community to their friends, family or colleagues.

CONCLUSIONS

Discussion

To give a proper discussion of results, focus falls on the outcomes of each hypothesis given and the variables included in the questionnaire.

To begin, the study shows that people who join the ASPCA OC do so to be part of a community and to meet people; this is also the reason they participate more by signing-in more frequently to the site. The results show that all respondents own pets, which gives a clear indication that personal relevance does indeed play a part in joining an online community such as the ASPCA. It seems that people want to belong to something and meet new people; people who are also animal lovers, as themselves. While it may seem that this matters more to them than the desire to help animals, be closer to the cause or learn more about the nonprofit organization itself, this is not necessarily the case. It just reveals that the aforementioned reasons may not be the primary reasons people sign-in more frequently; they *are* still important to respondents, however, their correlation with involvement is just not as high as the other variables. Going back to the information given by the HSUS regarding the “basic human needs,” here the needs that are being fulfilled are “to belong or to be part of something” and “to connect to other people (TAFSA, 2008). Additionally, “Consumers find emotional and practical benefits in participating in online discussions” (Riegner 2007, p. 436), and this statement shows the reason behind involvement in the OC. Regardless, it is still a great reason to be involved in the ASPCA Online Community, because the more people sign-in and talk, the more they are meeting people and — at the same time — are being exposed to new information, new viewpoints and new issues surrounding animal rights issues.

This is the outcome that every nonprofit should desire; people talking about their organization and the issues that surround them on a daily basis. Whatever the reason that people are active (or not) in their communities out in the real world, they were brought to the site because of their love for animals and their participation, no matter the reason, is the most important aspect of ePhilanthropy. Finding out what gets people to the site is just as crucial as knowing how it affects their online participation. Interestingly enough, the results are split almost equally when people are asked if they belong to other animal welfare online

communities. This answer shows the importance of animal welfare to those people who join the ASPCA, so it is apparent that this subject brings people to the site, even if not the primary reason.

In this study, the value proposition generated by members is not so strong. That is, members are not spreading word of mouth to others in favor of the site as much as they may indicate. While a majority of people are still fairly new to the OC (less than one month of being a member, a possible reason for the low volume of WOM), more people than not say that they *have* indeed referred friends to the site since joining the community. It must be stressed that referring others to the site still is a great way to push the cause and spread its importance to others. An overwhelming amount of respondents claim they are “extremely likely” to recommend the online community to their friends or colleagues, so it is clear that the satisfaction level of users is in a positive position. The ASPCA should give users every option to pass along positive feedback and word of mouth to future users, who then only stand to increase the awareness of the company, its brand image, and its cause.

Since joining the community, people who have contributed to the cause by making a donation have done so because they are aware of the effect their donation will have on the organization and the animals it supports. This can correspond with the initial statement regarding the reason why people join the ASPCA community in the first place; even if they do it to meet new people, the action of donating comes from their desire to “make a difference” and to “help towards the cause.” Again, it shows how important the message of the ASPCA already is, as community members enjoy the feeling they get when making a donation that will help make a change. Even those who do not make a contribution only claim they are not able to do so because of financial reasons, not social or security reasons. It seems people who responded to the survey are comfortable making donations online and know that even small donations make a difference; some individuals, however, are just not at a place where they can financially commit to donations. This could be directly related to the young respondents of the questionnaire, whose access to capital is reasonably (and understandably) lower than those in higher age brackets.

Overall, community members feel that their thoughts are accepted and respected (when expressed) and their knowledge of the ASPCA as an organization has increased by being part of the community. This is a great aspect to ongoing discussions/postings on the

Web; conversations are up-to-date, relevant and concentrated. When asked how involved individuals are with the cause since joining the ASPCA OC, the most populated responses are “more involved” and “much more involved.” Nonprofit organizations looking to spread awareness cannot overlook the importance and significance of this statement, for it shows that the virtual community is bringing a higher level of social change, or at least a desire for it. Regardless of their previous level of involvement, this community *is* making an impact and people *are* recognizing the strength of this method of communication.

Overwhelming majorities of people say they “enjoy being part of this online community” and this is only emphasized by the response to overall satisfaction. People say that their level of satisfaction is “very high” and this level must be maintained at all possible costs, for positive reinforcement and word of mouth will lead to higher member generation and retention. The right people are populating the site, spreading their positive feedback to each other and raising the awareness and satisfaction level simultaneously. If it continues on this pattern, it can only lead to an increased amount of members for the ASPCA in the future.

Managerial Implications

Social marketing in the nonprofit field is here to stay and is a very important aspect to consider when dealing with mass media communication. Knowing what motivates people to join, to act, to respond, to investigate and to pass along messages to others is the basis for philanthropy on the Web. ePhilanthropy, specifically, has allowed the nonprofit world to see how technology can be used for the benefit of charity and how much closer the online user gets to the cause itself. The Internet has given online members the power to control content and the nonprofit cause in real-time, and this is what makes for a very valuable addition to traditional marketing messages.

Today’s generations embrace technology and the power it gives them to join with people who have the same interests. Online communities provide this much-needed and desired network, so organizations around the globe must be open to utilizing this medium just as much — if not more — than they have in the past. The relevance of the Web is justifiable through the surplus of people it can reach at any given time, over time. More and

more people are finding communities to join and providing this is the only option for nonprofit organizations who want to emphasize their social cause.

Directions for Future Research

This paper provides several options for future research, the most important that similar studies should be repeated in the context of other nonprofit marketing fields, such as human rights or environmental safety, for example. This would allow marketers and nonprofit organizations alike to comprehend the importance of online communities and the habits of its users in a different setting. Comparing and contrasting the results from the various studies could also bring about a more inclusive viewpoint of social marketing, ePhilanthropy and the importance of word of mouth communication.

In the end, nonprofit organizations must realize *and* embrace the strength of the Web and all its components as a complement to traditional communication activities. With the Internet as a tool, it is possible for organizations to share communication, engagement, transparency and trust with the outside audience, all aspects that are crucial to achieving success and better yet, social change (Lefebvre 2007). My hope is that this paper will encourage more research in the nonprofit marketing field, in an effort to better understand and utilize this essential philosophy.

Limitations

As is the case with all research, this paper has its own set of limitations. Given the short time frame available for this study, it was possible to collect only a small number of samples for analysis. The results given, therefore, may prove to be less representative of the exact results, had there been more time for completion. While results can still be studied and applied to the area of nonprofit marketing, more precise results would ensue with more time.

Research provided in the paper deals solely with virtual communities in the nonprofit field, rather than the for-profit sector; this accounts for variance of results and must be adjusted as needed, since broad generalizations beyond this field are not relevant or accurate. The reasons for joining an online community for a service-based industry, or a company

selling certain products will be different. These aspects would require strict analysis before any new conclusions could be reached.

While hard to prove, online communities based on animal rights/advocacy may yield different results than those communities dealing with *other* issues, such as educational concerns, politics or the rights of women. Respondents might answer differently when asked why they joined an OC if the cause itself is linked to something more controversial or humanity-based; some people may place a higher value on human rights issues than those of animals, which would affect results.

The method carried out for finding the questionnaire participants limits the group to recipients of the personal email and the request for help. Approaching potential respondents in another manner — such as starting a new online group and allowing people to find and join the group on their own, instead of being pursued — may yield different numbers and even responses. Being approached within the community by a “friend” to fill out a survey may confine respondents to answering questions a certain way, since they are aware of the person reading and analyzing the final responses. Adjusting the search method might also give a more evenly-distributed female/male response pool. Females may have answered questions more emotionally than males, or placed a different emphasis on important factors for satisfaction, so these changes are relevant.

Finally, basing the research on the ASPCA organization and its online community limits the results to the United States. Even though many of the messages and campaigns are able to transcend international borders, this virtual community deals solely with the respondents who live in the U.S. and would therefore not represent the entire animal advocacy cause.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Online Questionnaire

Complete outline of the online questionnaire distributed to members of the ASPCA Online Community.

Membership: The following questions deal with your online community membership habits.

1. Approximately how long have you been a member of the ASPCA Online Community?

- Less than 1 month
- Between 1 to 3 months
- Between 3 to 5 months
- Between 5 to 7 months
- More than 7 months

2. How did you hear about the ASPCA Online Community? (open response)

3. What made you decide to join the ASPCA Online Community? Please indicate your response for each statement, utilizing the scale below:

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=neutral

4=agree

5=strongly agree

- I wanted to be a part of an online community that helps animals
- I wanted to help make a difference for animals
- I believe being a part of an online community brings us closer to the cause (helping animals)
- I like meeting new people who have the same interests as me
- I wanted to learn more about the ASPCA
- I am a part of many online communities, so this was just one more to join

- Other-please specify (open response)

4. Approximately how many days during a 7-day week do you visit (sign-in to) the ASPCA Online Community?

- Once a week
- 2-3 days a week
- 4-5 days a week
- 6-7 days a week
- More than once a day

5. Approximately how often do you post comments on the ASPCA Online Community page? (Please note, posting comments refers to commenting on other people's groups or discussions, or starting your own group or discussion).

- Never
- Rarely
- Once a month
- Once every other week
- Once a week
- 2-3 days a week
- Every day

6. Approximately how many groups do you belong to on the ASPCA Online Community?

- None
- 1-5 groups
- 6-10 groups
- 11-15 groups
- More than 15 groups

7. Of the groups you belong to in the ASPCA Online Community, approximately how many of them did you start yourself? (open response)

8. Since joining the ASPCA Online Community, have you referred any friends to the site?

- No
- Yes
 - If you answered 'yes,' approximately how many? (open response)

9. What is the likelihood you would recommend the ASPCA Online Community to friends of colleagues?

- Not at all likely
 - Somewhat likely
 - Not sure
 - Likely
 - Extremely likely
-

Donation Habits: The following questions deal with your donation habits, as related to the ASPCA.

10. Since joining the online community, approximately how many times have you donated money to the ASPCA?

- I have never donated to the ASPCA
- I have donated 'x' number of times (please specify below-open response)
 - Number of donations: _____

11. If you have donated to the ASPCA since joining the online community, approximately how much have you given each time you donated?

- Under \$25
- \$25-\$49
- \$50-\$79
- \$80 or over
- I have never donated to the ASPCA

12. If you have donated to the ASPCA, what factors contributed to your donation? Please indicate your response for each statement, utilizing the scale below:

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=neutral

4=agree

5=strongly agree

- I wanted to make a difference for animals
- I enjoy how I feel when I donate to such a cause
- I know my donation will help towards the cause
- Other-please specify (open response)

13. If you have never donated to the ASPCA, please indicate your response for each statement, utilizing the scale below:

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=neutral

4=agree

5=strongly agree

- I don't feel secure making a donation online
- I don't feel like my small donations will make a difference
- At this time, financially, I cannot commit to making a donation
- Other-please specify (open response)

Satisfaction: The following questions deal with your overall satisfaction of the ASPCA Online Community.

14. For the following statements, please indicate your response by utilizing the scale below:

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=neutral

4=agree

5=strongly agree

- I find that my thoughts and opinions (when expressed) are generally accepted by this online community
- I find that my thoughts and opinions (when expressed) are generally respected by this online community

- I feel I have learned a lot more about the ASPCA by being a member of this online community
- I really enjoy being a part of this online community

15. For the following statement regarding your overall satisfaction, please indicate your response by utilizing the scale below:

1=very low

2=low

3=neutral

4=high

5=very high

- Generally speaking, I would say that my level of satisfaction with the ASPCA Online Community is...
-

Miscellaneous: The following questions deal with online communities.

16. Are you a part of any other animal welfare online communities?

- No
- Yes
 - If you answered 'yes,' please list here (open response)

17. Since joining the ASPCA Online Community, would you say you are more involved with the cause, less involved, or the same?

- Much less involved
- Less involved
- About the same
- More involved
- Much more involved

Demographics: These (last) questions deal with overall demographic details.

18. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

19. What is your age?

- Under 18
- 18-21
- 22-25
- 26-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 61 and over

20. What is your highest level of education completed?

- Less than High School
- High School/GED
- 2-year College Degree (Associates)
- 4-year College Degree (BS, BA)
- Master's Degree
- Doctoral Degree
- Professional Degree (MD, JD)

21. What is your current job status?


- Student
- Work full-time
- Work part-time
- Retired
- Looking for work
- Unemployed

22. Do you currently own any pets?

- No
- Yes
 - If you answered 'yes,' how many? (open response)

-End of Survey-


Appendix B: ASPCA Web Site
(www.aspc.org)



ASPCA
THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR THE
PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS®

JOIN THE ASPCA TODAY

WE ARE THEIR VOICE.®



MEMBER LOG-IN

User Name

LOG-IN

[Need help logging in?](#)

JOIN THE ASPCA
Get our newsletter, lobby for humane laws, and more!

REGISTER NOW

Ways To Help

- Donate Now
- Shop Online
- Lobby For Animals
- Fight Animal Cruelty
- Adopt

Expert Advice


- Pet Care
- Animal Poison Control
- Animal Behavior
- Disaster Preparedness

About Us

- About the ASPCA
- Pressroom
- ASPCA Blog
- Jobs at the ASPCA
- ASPCA Community

Programs

- ASPCA® Mission: Orange™
- Equine Program
- ASPCA Professional
- Humane Education
- For Kids: ASPCA Animaland
- New York City



Sarah McLachlan ASPCA Supporter

RIGHT NOW THERE'S AN ANIMAL WHO NEEDS YOU.

YOUR GIFT SAYS, "I'M HERE TO HELP."

MAKE A GIFT TODAY.


NEWS AND ALERTS

ASPCA [PRESS RELEASE](#)
ASPCA issues statement on Eight Belles' tragic death at 2008 Kentucky Derby

[ASPCA NEWS ALERT](#)
Teen's wish granted on ASPCA Day.

[PRESS RELEASE](#)
For jaunting or jet-setting pets, ASPCA offers travel tips just in time for vacation season.

DONATE TO THE ASPCA TODAY



FREE ASPCA STUFF!


- [Get a Free Magnet](#)
- [Order a Free Sticker](#)
- [Free ASPCA Ringtones](#)
- [Send ASPCA eCards](#)
- [Download Wallpaper](#)
- [Free ASPCA Toolbar](#)

ONLINE COMMUNITY

- [Discussion Forums](#)
- [Join a Group](#)
- [Upload Your Photos](#)
- [Upload Your Videos](#)

1,000,000 signatures will make a difference in the fight to end animal cruelty.

Add My Name ➔



0 50k 100k 200k 500k 700k 850k 1 Million

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

[NOMINATE YOUR HERO!](#)

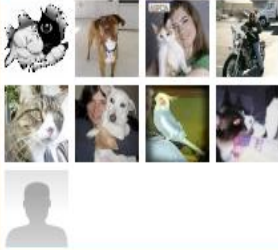
MAKE MOM PROUD!

ASPCA ONLINE COMMUNITY



- [Main](#)
- [My Page](#)
- [Members](#)
- [Forum](#)
- [Groups](#)
- [Photos](#)
- [Videos](#)

Featured Members



[View All](#)

Photos



Alibi & wulfie
by Wulfie

Groups



Pet Memorial Group
(100 members)



Bird House
(54 members)



Happy Endings
(179 members)



Reptile Room
(60 members)



That's Fishy
(48 members)



Pit Bulls
(463 members)



Horsing Around
(203 members)



Helping Animals
(780 members)



Catsville
(591 members)



Dogsville
(661 members)

[View All](#)

Forum

Infamous Marine-Puppy video clip

645 Replies

Thanks to everyone who contacted us about the video clip recently seen all over the Web, where a member of the United States Military can be seen apparently committing a heinous act of animal cruel... [Continue](#)

Tagged: [marine](#), [soldier](#), [puppy](#)

Sign Up

or [Sign In](#)

Latest Activity



[Wulfie](#) added the blog post '[Safety Halters](#)'
2 minutes ago



[Sandy & Roxv & Junior](#) left a comment for [Renee`](#)
7 minutes ago



[Darlene Poole](#) left a comment for [Jenny baby Jughead J](#)
11 minutes ago












[Veronica](#)'s profile changed
11 minutes ago



[Vladimir](#) left a comment for [DORIS WOODS](#)
12 minutes ago

Appendix D: Front Page (Lower Section) of ASPCA OC

 <p>Orion eating hornworm Added by Jason Cook</p>	<p>+ Start Discussion View All</p>	<p>complete their sentences to make learning your way around a cinch.</p>
 <p>Tila fetch Added by Jason Cook</p>	<p>We're out there. And we wanna connect with you.</p>	<p>Ways to Support Us:</p>
 <p>"bubbly" cover Added by kelly colev</p>	 <p>Facebook There are several ways to connect with us here: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Add our Adopt an ASPCA Pet Application - Become an ASPCA Fan - Join our Cause </p>	
 <p>"This Is Me" cover Added by kelly colev</p>	 <p>MySpace Send us a friend request, a comment, a message—we love hearing from you! Don't forget to check out our photo albums of available animals at our shelter and adopted cats and dogs.</p>	<p>Join us in the fight to end animal cruelty!</p>
<p>View Videos</p>	 <p>Bebo New! We now have a profile on this growing network—we hope to see you there!</p>	<p>Donate to the ASPCA Today</p>
<p>ASPCA Expert Chat Transcripts</p>	 <p>YouTube Take a tour of our shelter, meet our animals, get training tips and more!</p>	<p>For as little as 60 cents a day, you can directly impact the lives of needy animals.</p>
	<p>ASPCA Blog</p>	<p>Become an ASPCA Guardian</p>
	<p>Get Training Tips From An ASPCA Expert Today!</p>	<p>ASPCA Online Community Badge</p>
	<p>ASPCA to Speak at Conference on Michael Vick Case</p>	<p>ASPCA Online Community</p>
	<p>ASPCA Pets of the Week: It Takes Two!</p>	<p>The ASPCA Online Community is a great place to meet fellow</p>
	<p>Tell Us... How Does Your Dog Give Back?</p>	<p>12,182 members Join Us</p>
		<p>Spread the word. Get your own ASPCA Online Community badge for your website or MySpace page.</p>

Appendix E: Personal Page of ASPCA OC

Main My Page Members Forum Groups Photos Videos Invite

My Page My Friends My Blog + Invite Friends Hello, Selin Sign Out

My Friends (Invite More)
My Settings

Let's fight for those who have no voice of their own-ANIMALS!

Latest Activity Edit

- You joined the group [STOP BSL, DOG FIGHTING, ABUSE AND NEGLECT AND PUPPY MILLS](#) 9 seconds ago
- You left a comment for [Melissa](#) 1 day ago
- [Melissa](#) left a comment for you May 5
- You joined the group [K-9 Kare](#) Apr 28

RSS Privacy

Profile Edit

I would like to receive emails from the ASPCA about important pet care information and ways to fight animal cruelty. My email address is: selinannasoyak@gmail.com

Latest Activity

- [Selin](#) joined the group [STOP BSL, DOG FIGHTING, ABUSE AND NEGLECT AND PUPPY MILLS](#) 10 seconds ago
- Welcome, [Agnes](#)! You are member #7706 of ASPCA Online Community. 3 minutes ago
- [Agnes](#) joined the group [Catsville](#) 3 minutes ago
- [Bunny](#) started a discussion called [200 dead puppies](#)

Selin
25, Female
Wilmington, United States
Change My Photo or Theme
Share

Photos (29)
Discussions (1)