Lead Author: Kimberly Lee
Degree objective when research was completed: Bachelor’s
Major: Communication (Emphasis: Public Relations)
College: CLASS

Co-presenter(s): Not applicable

Faculty Mentor(s): Dr. Nell Huang Horowitz

Bronco Student Center
Time of Presentation: 4 to 6 pm

Presentation Type: Poster Session

Project Title: Social media discourse: A case study of nonprofits’ use of interactive communication

Synopsis: This study examines nonprofit organizations’ use of social media as a public relations tool for media relations, donor relations, volunteer relations and interactive communication.

Abstract: Social media platforms open up new opportunities for organizations to communicate with and engage their stakeholders and the general public. The main goal of this study is to examine how nonprofit organizations from different sectors utilize social media platforms as a public relations tool for media relations, donor relations, volunteer relations and interactive communication.

Existing literature has shown that the use of social media is a beneficial method of communication for public relation practitioners working for nonprofit organizations (Curtis et al., 2010). Nonprofits’ frequent shortage of staff members, time and resources make it difficult for them to interact with their stakeholders (Briones, Kuch, Liu, & Jin, 2011). Fortunately, social media platforms can help the organizations efficiently and effectively reach two-thirds of the world’s Internet population (Briones et al., 2011).

This study uses the case study method to understand communicative functions and benefits of social media. More specifically, it examines three nonprofit organizations from the top three sectors that make up the nonprofit industry: health services, education, and social and legal services. It focuses on their use of the top three social networking sites: Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

Examining the organizations’ use of social media platforms may reveal sector-specific techniques that can benefit growing organizations. This study hopes to provide other nonprofit organizations in the health services, education, and social and legal services sectors a guideline to effectively use social media websites to connect with their stakeholders and the general public.