A Retrospective Study of Supporter Engagement with Non-Government Organizations on Social Media

Siddharth Tripathi*, Sanjeev Verma

NITIE, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India-400087
*Corresponding Author: Siddharth Tripathi**

Abstract: *In recent years, with the evolution of social media platforms, government, non-government, and business organizations have increasingly turned to social media. The emergence of social media platforms has presented NGOs a reasonable mode of communication to initiate and implement social marketing campaigns. Advanced features of social media have outdated the old medium of communication and non-government organizations (NGOs) are adopting social media to improve their performance. The utility of social media platforms has gained importance to invite more supporters on social media platforms to engage with NGOs. Previously, researchers have demonstrated the utility of social media for organizations but it is unanswered that why do people engage on social media and what are the factors responsible for enhancing the supporter involvement on social media to participate in social activities. In this paper, the researcher has attempted to identify the factors of supporter engagement with reference to NGOs on social media. Behavioural understanding of supporters may be helpful to NGOs to appeal additional supporters and donors. NGOs require intensive effort to understand the dimensions of supporter engagement on social media. An extensive literature review was done to understand the underlying reasons for supporter engagement with NGOs on social media. A retrospective study of supporter engagement has emphasized on psychological, organizational and technological factors. The emerged dimensions will be helpful for NGOs to better recognize the need to classify the supporters to enhance participation in social activities.*

Keywords: Engagement, Non-Government Organizations, NGOs, Participation, Social Media, Supporter

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I. Introduction

Social media are computer-mediated tools that allow individuals or organizations to create, share, or exchange information, ideas, and pictures, audios or videos in virtual communities and networks (Walther, 1996). Social media is featured with a two-way mode of communication (Glassman, Straus, & Shogan, 2009). It is easy to create and publish contents which are open for commenting and further sharing with other peers on the network (Sigala, 2007). NGOs have recognized social media as an important medium for reaching significant donors and driving the campaigns to advance towards meeting the mission of the organization (Surman & Reilly, 2003). Non-government organizations cannot confine only on volunteers spreading contents to other individuals present on social media, but they may need to plan for a better understanding of donor or supporter behaviour and their respective preferences about NGO activities to accomplish their mission (Lewis, 2006). This has not only bounded NGOs to make their good presence on social media but also requires a good understanding of why, when and how to engage people with NGOs on social media. Many individuals from a different background, culture, location, and gender are present on social media platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube. These peers of the social network may be useful in creating content to have a viral effect to increase volunteerism and donations (Cogburn & Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011). This era of sharing content on social media has become very convenient technique and can be encouraged very easily to individuals, irrespective of their location. Social media has fragmented the footings of traditional donor-engagement techniques. Strategically planned campaign on social media can support non-government organizations to improve its reach towards potential supporters (Hatten, 1982). A literature review was done to make a good understanding of donor behaviour. This study explores the dimensions of engagement with non-government organization on social media. In the past two decades, it is pertinent that due to associated features, there is a tremendous increase in social media usage by various organizations (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). Figure 1 shows the year-wise increasing pattern of publications related to social media, social networking and its advantages for engagement with organizations. Engagement has different meanings to different people, but to the most marketers, it means getting a response from their target audience or individuals. Engagement represents a two-way dialogue between brands and the donors or supporters. Motivation plays an important role towards engagement (Van Doorn et al., 2010). Engagement is a multi-dimensional concept that includes cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions (Hollebeek, 2011).
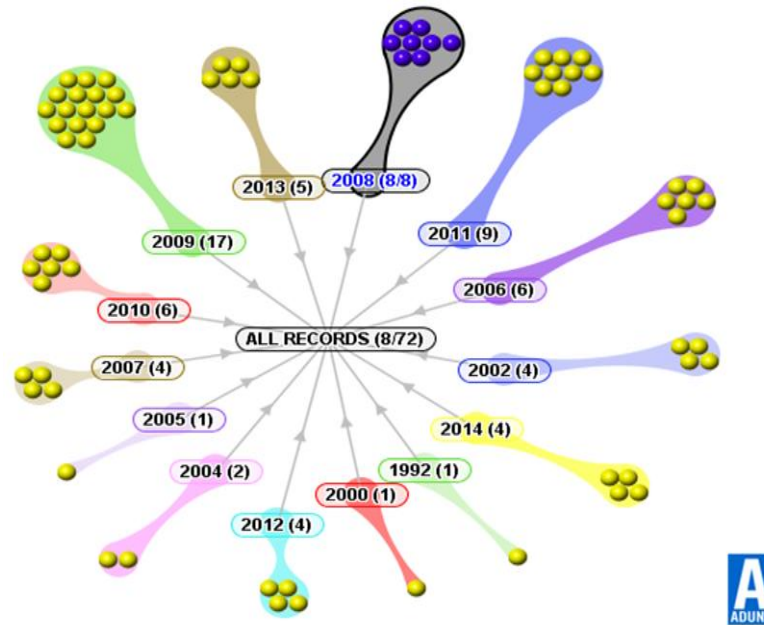
Figure 1: Publication pattern on social media, social networking and engagement

Engagement basically focuses on consumers' cognitive, emotional and behavioural dynamics during specific brand interactions whereas satisfaction may largely arise thereafter. Engagement occurs by virtue of an individual's interactive experiences with a particular object (Hollebeek, 2011). It is an iterative process commencing with customer satisfaction, and culminating in customer loyalty, where the transitional pathway to customer loyalty encapsulates calculative and affective commitment, trust, involvement and customer delight (Bowden, 2009). If the engagement is with the consumers then it is consumer engagement which is a multidimensional concept comprising cognitive, emotional, and/ or behavioural dimensions, and plays a central role in the process of relational exchange where other relational concepts are engagement antecedents and/or consequences in iterative engagement processes within the brand community on social media platforms.

II. Need of Study

The emergence of social media platforms has offered NGOs an inexpensive way to create and implement marketing campaigns. We have witnessed how social media technologies have brought political and social change in some countries. In order to attract more individuals on social media, it has become vital for an NGO to understand the factors responsible for engaging them to increase participation in NGO activities. Earlier, direct mail, phone calls, pamphlets were few of the techniques available to attract potential donors or supporters at a low level of engagement. The most promising individuals were focussed for larger donations. Evolution of social media has interrupted the traditional techniques of engagement with the supporters. Social media has surpassed the traditional mode of supporter engagement methods. Social media has given more opportunities to NGOs for deepening engagement with supporters in a variety of ways like online games, quizzes, viral video campaigns, clothes / mobile giving etc. Social media platforms have created attention of NGOs to define responsibilities of social media management teams for sharing content such as audio, video, and pictures and participating in participating in conversations and supporting the communities of interest.

NGOs have started using a button "donate now" on its website for fundraising. Regular online communication from NGOs on social media can support, promote and maintain decent relationships with supporters, as well as fascinate others to participate in the social cause. NGOs are now reforming their schemes for more effective participation by taking the advantage of social media to raise money, attract new supporters, volunteers, and donors. Donating money has a relatively high level of involvement because of substantial contribution, but a low level of influence if a person donates but does not tell others on the network to induce them. Forwarding an e-mail to friends or advocacy about a cause on social media to the peers of the network have the potential to influence them for participation in NGO activities. Thus, it has a high influencing value and low participation value due to the easiness of the task. Because of easiness to respond, at one instant, we can connect to maximum potential participants/supporters. The rising importance of social media encourages the segmentation of communication tactics of social media. The importance of E-newsletters and other automated channels are at the bottom, and personal outreach, face-to-face meetings, and other labour-intensive, high-touch channels at the top priority for NGOs on social media. In practice, segmented communication strategies are

quickly losing ground in a world in which the boundaries between offline and online, traditional and non-traditional media are blurring. The above discussion shows that there is an urgency to understand the underlying reasons for engagement with NGOs on social media. NGOs must segment, target and recognize the right supporter or donor who is contributing to the non-government organizational activities on social media for the welfare of the society. For many NGOs, social media is not only useful for sending the information that they want to share, but also for them to "listen in" to what is being said about them, to get feedback, and to monitor their image and reputation among the supporters or donors. To achieve the mission of any NGO, there is the need to organize the recruitment of technical staff to monitor and send messages on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms.

III. Methodology

The structured and systematic approach was done to review the existing literature. Due to the widespread availability of literature on "engagement, articles on engagement with social media and engagement with NGOs" were taken for the literature review. We restricted our search to those articles that provided the most direct assessment of relevance to and interest only within the user engagement discourse. Broadly, terms used interchangeably like engagement, participation, involvement etc. were considered to find all the relevant work done in the past on engagement on social media with special reference to non-government organizations. We have considered research papers beginning from the past two decades but more attention was given to the current academic research to understand the current scenario of engagement on social media. An extensive search for articles published from 1992 onwards was conducted to classify articles dealing with components of engagement. Figure 2 shows the list of journals considered for literature review. The keywords used to find the relevant research were non-government organizations, social media, social media and non-government organizations, engagement, participation, engagement with NGOs, engagement with NGO's and social media, behavioural intentions and social media, behavioural intentions and non-government organizations, factors affecting online donations, social media and NGO's. Google scholar, Elsevier, Springer, ABI/Inform (Proquest), Knimbus, EBSCO, Emerald-insight, and Science-direct are few of the online databases that were accessed during the entire literature review.

IV. Literature Review

A non-governmental organization (NGO) is an organization that is neither a part of a government nor a conventional for-profit business. NGOs are highly diverse groups of organizations engaged in a wide range of social activities and take different forms in different parts of the world. Previous discussions show that if NGOs want to succeed on social media, they have to be good at social media technology which requires a clear understanding of how, when, and why individuals engage with NGOs on social media. It also requires a commitment to a content strategy and allocation of budget for social media. NGOs may think to plan to convert followers into donors, event attendees, and volunteers. The reliance of NGOs on the media to publicize their causes is an important aspect of their campaigning for social participation (Patten, 2002). Societal participation may include any of the forms like campaigning, elaboration of ideas comments on diverse social spheres of culture, project or region. In the past, NGOs have not only used websites for the purpose of providing information to the supporters, volunteers, and donors, but also for advertising, networking, and fundraising. Today, social media is widely accepted as an essential tool for reducing advertising cost, enhancing communication speed, achieving the organizational development goals. Awareness of NGO activities can be created with an expensive advertising campaign, but an attractive alternative is the word of mouth, amplified by word of blog, online reviews, testimonials from celebrities, and links from popular portals. A significant feature that differentiates social media from traditional media is the central role of user interaction and participation in generating content that makes the platform sustainable and potentially profitable (Phang, Zhang, & Sutanto, 2013). Research on how non-government organizations (NGOs) are using social media is very limited, but the use of the internet as a tool for social change and activism has been investigated (Preece & Shneiderman, 2009). Need of increasing engagement rises due to the adoption of social media technology by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Engagement is associated with the supporter experience on social media. Engagement on social media can be classified into three levels i.e. content consumption, contribution, and creation (Rodgers, 2001). The lowest level of engagement is content consumption which includes a viewing of a picture, video, and reading of product reviews. Contributions to page content come under the moderate level of engagement like the rating of products and services, companies, taking part in wall post conversations, and commenting on posted videos or pictures. The highest level of engagement is creation which refers to creating and sharing of user-generated content. The review of the literature available revealed primarily three dimensions of engagement with NGOs on social media.
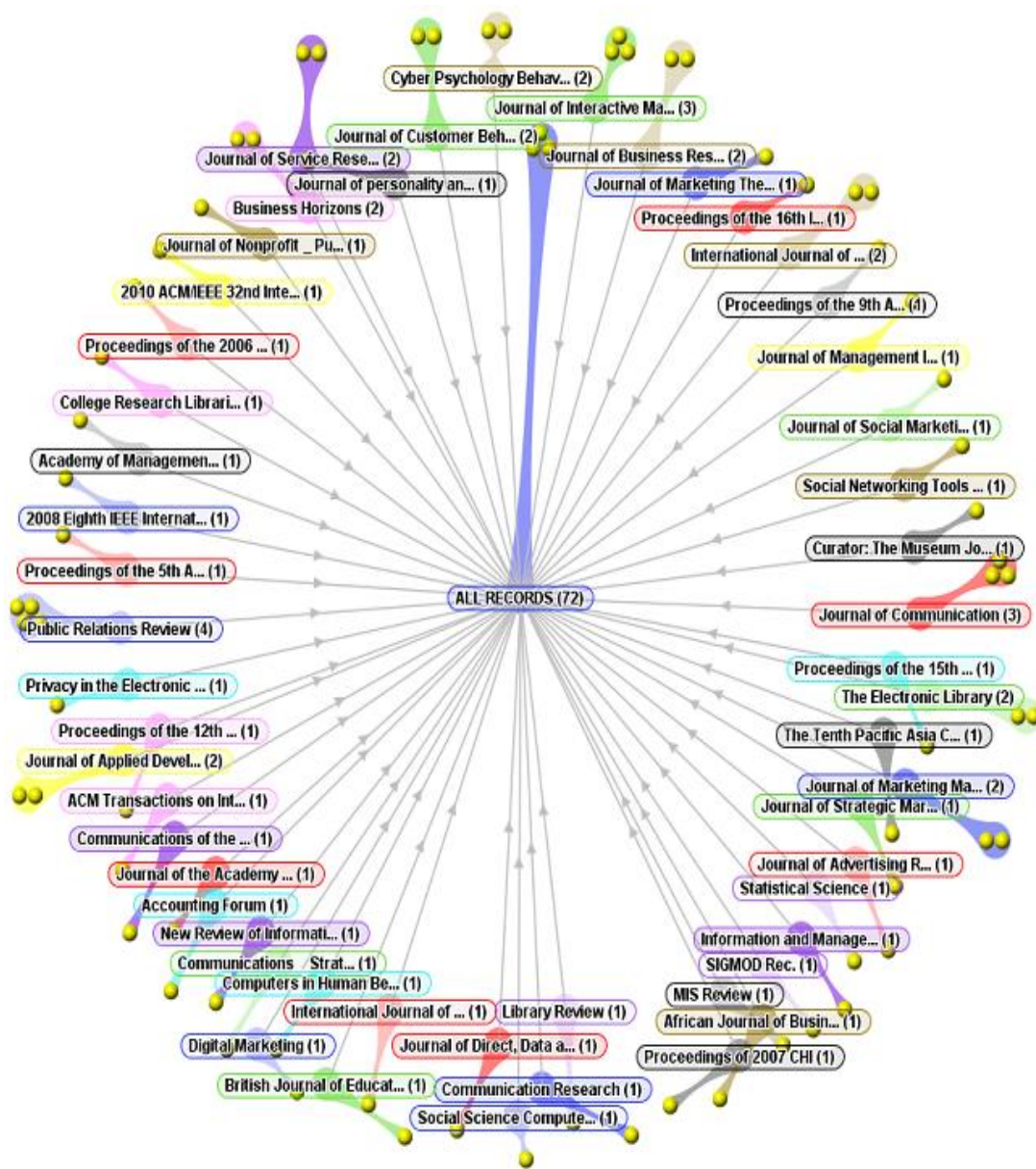
Figure 2: Journals Reviewed

These articles advocate that supporters or donors on social media can be influenced by psychological, organizational and technological factors. NGOs need to understand these dimensions to increase supporter engagement on social media resulting in greater participation in social welfare activities. A key focus of this study is to recognize supporter behaviour so that NGOs can market the organization leading to memberships and donations. Information on social media also helps to engage members, neighbours or contacting politicians to express their views. Peers of the network feel closer to the organization and leads to stronger support for NGOs to meet their mission.

4.1 Psychological Factors

The Social networking sites can become networks of interpersonal ties that provide sociability, support, and information, a sense of belonging and social identity (Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit, 2011). If we look on social media then we find that we do many activities online and there are some psychological strings that are being pulled with each of the activities. When we post anything then there is something that triggers our mind to post on social media. An experiment has shown that volunteers prefer to post two types of photos: the logo for a brand they love and pictures of their known ones. Nowadays, it is essential for an NGO to assess various factors of its social marketing campaign to work. These factors include attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of the target

communities, their cultural priorities, the basis by which they envision their participation in a community (demographics) and how the communities locate, assess, test, construct and communicate knowledge as well as how new knowledge is received from outside the community (Grier & Bryant, 2005). Supporter Behaviours can influence other supporters on social media with the positive word of mouth, sharing of positive or negative experiences, and advertising, new ideas, a rating of product and services, and complaints. Supporter behaviours can also be influenced by others for supporting a cause by seeking information about products, following product reviews and ratings, learning a new product, brand and promotions and public relations activities on social media. The brands that can create aspirational ways for their community to interact with them, not only create social media opportunities, but also the chance to move beyond likes into something lasting. The product for social marketing is often information designed to bring about attitudinal and behavioural change (Donovan, Henley, & others, 2003). The advertisements of non-government organizations are found to focus more on emotional reasoning than product detail (Kelleher, 2009). Interactive blogs create a personal connection with users and facilitate positive attitudes towards the organization, and encourage supportive word-of-mouth intentions (Yang & Kang, 2009). People who use blogs to interact with organizations perceive blogs as stimulating dialogue and building trust and satisfaction (Stater, 2009).

One of the biggest reason why we share on social is to maintain a connection with the peers of the network. The contents that are designed for social media does not need to appeal to a large group or an average group but it just needs to appeal to a specific individual or donor available on the online network. And when we share the right type of content, we gain social value. People feel better about themselves when people react positively to what they post on social media. When we like each other's comments or posts on social media, we add value to the relationship and reinforce that closeness. The marketers have realized that conversations of donors or supporters on social media cannot be totally ignored. More is the interaction or engagement level between the supporters and an NGO, more is the long-term advocacy as well as the relationship with them. This means being actively engaged in the comments section of the blog and with the customer reviews about NGOs are crucial, not so much to the person we are responding to but for everyone participating in the shared reality of comments and reviews. Spending time using social networks is correlated with virtual empathy, which carries over into the real world. If we share about any social cause or a social challenge on social media, we may experience the resounding support that may come from friends and even those we might not expect. Thus, social media can be used to influence the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of communities to produce social change.

4.2 Organizational Factors

Social media has become a medium of communication for worldwide huge audience coverage. This medium is also being used by different non-government organizations to spread awareness about an issue or to educate other people on social media. Apart from non-government organizations, volunteers working in the area of social welfare are also finding it useful to spread awareness among the individuals. Organizational capacity is a prerequisite for working successfully towards the organization's mission, its goals, and objectives. Non-government organizations (NGOs) are facing various challenges for the implementation of their projects due to insufficient resources. Few of the imperative challenges are funding from external agencies or donations, volunteers, employee retention etc. Most essentially non-government organizations can use social media wherein they can facilitate effective communication. Previous studies have ascertained that the cost of communication on social media is very low in comparison to any other mode. In order to engage the supporters on social media, it is essential for NGOs to create new and exciting content, and keep up with trends to engage them. To achieve the mission and succeed, it has become essential for non-government organizations to improve performance, funding, participation and engagement of supporters in social welfare activities. Organizational performance is a function of an enabling environment, organizational capacity and organizational motivation. The experiments have shown that donors and supporters fund only to those non-government organizations for the longer term that manage their financial resources well and achieve the objectives of projects and programs. Donors will only continue to contribute if they have enough income and the products and services of NGOs are fulfilling their expectations.

Non-government organizations are primarily dependent on donations and experience a larger split between the revenue acquisition process and the operations of the organizations because they are unable to pay them for the service and hence voluntary donations become more necessary (Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007). Non-government organizations receive voluntary gifts, grants, and public subsidies for their operations. This form of fund or resource acquisition does not apply to the for-profit organizations that do not operate in the conditions of market failure (Sciulli & Bebko, 2006). The performance of an organization has a direct impact on its relationship with donors, grant makers, supporters, and beneficiaries. NGOs must be efficient and effective in organizational processes to make a balance in income and expenditure. NGOs cannot distribute any revenues or gifts in excess of total production costs to its owners (i.e., board members, managers, or employees) and are held to special standards of financial transparency and accounting conduct (Bendapudi, Singh, & Bendapudi, 1996).

NGOs should communicate frequently with donors, supporters, and beneficiaries. Feedback given by the peers of the network should be analyzed to improve internal processes of the organization. Many NGOs create two marketing messages, one to encourage voluntary donations and revenue generation and another to encourage clients to purchase or receive services offered by the organization (Hansmann, 1980). NGOs capability, performance, and their project play a vital role in influencing supporter engagement on social media. NGOs have access to affordable information that may help the organization to improve performance through social media. The challenge of any Non-government organizations (NGOs) is that they focus completely on carrying out their mission and do a very little job in promoting what they do for the society. The biggest issue of an NGO is the limitation of a budget. It is has been observed that NGOs that investing in the promotion of their programs and activities on social media platforms are developing more and more in terms of generating funds.

4.3 Technological Factors

Non-government organizations (NGOs) are using social media technology to maximize potential in several areas, primarily in supporting the organization mission and meeting reporting requirements to funders, donor, supporters, and regulators. Social media has created a new trend of gathering, processing, and sharing information with customers. This trend should also occur in the realm of social marketing (Bennett, 2009). On the contrary, sometimes due to budgetary constraints non-government organizations (NGOs) are not able to upgrade their hardware or software, buy computers, or provide internet services tools and social media technology training to staff to the level of business organizations. This means that, often, non-government organizations (NGOs) can be on the wrong side of the digital divide but the benefits of social media technology cannot be ignored. The objective of social marketing is to create social change for the well-being of the individual and society through the application of marketing techniques (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). The peers of the network spontaneously initiate comments on any video, image or post available on the social media.

Non-government organizations (NGOs) may concentrate on the posts that may serve as a catalyst to trigger further initiation of comments on a particular post. The post may be very specific about a project that attracts the peers of the network. Split between funders and beneficiaries impacts marketing appeals because supporters have distinct criteria for taking a decision to participate in NGO activities. For instance, donors consider mission worthiness and organizational legitimacy, whereas beneficiaries or clients typically consider service quality (Lefebvre, 2011). Sometimes excessive satisfaction or dissatisfaction leads more online word of mouth behaviour (Brady, Noble, Utter, & Smith, 2002). The study has also shown that electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) create positive word of mouth and focuses on the long term customer and organizational relationships. Electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) also encourage customers for their positive behaviors and put emphasis on opinion leaders with a win-win strategy (Dellarocas, Narayan, & others, 2006). Fan community can be utilized by non-government organizations to promote their products and services in a much more personal and individualized way (Sawhney, Verona, & Prandelli, 2005). Previous studies have suggested that content that is disseminated through fans and shared through communities produces almost 50% higher sales orders than any traditional forms of marketing (Rakic & Rakic, 2014). Sometimes, a goal-oriented behaviour is demonstrated on the social media by creating the content like posting on the wall or commenting on others' postings. These behaviours are characterized by utilitarian benefits, interest in content, directed and intentional engagement (Füller, 2010). Donors and supporters are increasing overwhelmed by storytelling texts on social media.

V. Result

The following figure depicts the framework evolved through the literature review. It showcases that most of the authors have primarily discussed about the three dimensions such as psychological, organizational, and technological factors of engagement on social media.
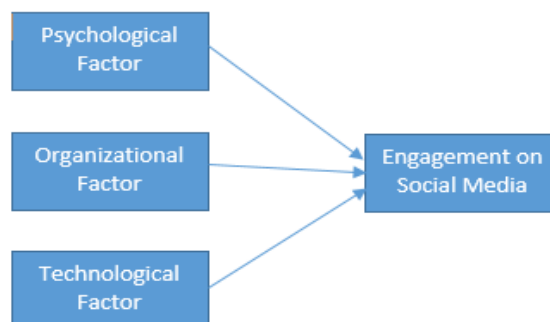

Figure 3: Determinants of Supporter Engagement with NGOs on Social Media

VI. Conclusion and Discussion

A Social media has immense opportunities for NGOs to deepen engagement with supporters on the network. The review of articles suggest that supporters or donors on social media can be influenced by psychological, organizational and technological factors. These are basically three dimensions of engagement with NGOs on social media. NGOs can leverage the benefit of social media by focusing on these three dimensions. The strategic plan of NGOs to increase supporter engagement on social media may result in greater participation for the social welfare of the society. Strategically planned campaign on social media will support non-government organizations to improve its reach towards potential supporters. On the other side, supporter segmentation on social media will help NGOs to promote and maintain decent relationship with the supporters, as well as they can fascinate others to participate in the social cause. Social media campaign will essentially be very effective for NGOs if they can assess various factors like information on behavioural attitudes, positive attitudes of supporter towards the organization, beliefs and behaviours of the target communities, their cultural priorities, the basis by which they envision their participation in a community, their demography and how the communities locate, assess, test, construct and communicate knowledge as well as how new knowledge is received from outside the community.

NGOs capability, performance, and their project play a vital role in influencing supporter engagement on social media. NGOs should have access to affordable information that may help the organization to improve performance through social media. Retention of volunteers, doors can be achieved by maintaining good communication and relationship with them on social media NGOs. With the application of social media technology, social marketing becomes very convenient to NGOs to create social change for the well-being society. Fan community on social media can also be utilized by non-government organizations (NGOs) to promote their programs and services. Advance planning of scheduling updates and tweets to reach donors at an appropriate time will increase the traffic to NGO website. E-newsletters and social network communities will increase branding and online fundraising. Cause awareness campaigns help non-government organizations (NGOs) to get universal exposure resulting in increased donations.

VII. Recommendations

With above discussions, NGOs must strategically think to increase engagement on social media. Non-government organizations (NGOs) should do advance planning to schedule updates and tweets to reach donors and supporters at an appropriate time. The increase in traffic to the website of NGO will build through e-newsletters and social network communities will increase online fundraising. Creating an online communications campaigns around cause awareness days can help the organization to get worldwide exposure and increased online donations. NGOs should understand the power of a donor or a supporter who can also engage on social media on behalf of NGO on any special occasion like world NGO day.

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