



**Assessing the use of social media for stakeholder communication in the
Environmental and Faith-based NGO sector.**

by

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Signed: NN Magadla

Date: December 2021

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List of Acronyms

NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation

NPO - Non Profit Organisation

QCA - Qualitative Content Analysis

SAFCEI: Southern African Faith Communities Institute

SMM – Social Media Manager

Green Anglicans – Anglican Environmental Network of Southern Africa

1: Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The debate about social media as a powerful tool to disseminate information timely and expansively is ongoing. The rise of social media for mainstream communication has resulted in organisations wanting to tap into this space to achieve organisational goals. Since 2010, social media has penetrated profoundly into the day-to-day running of life, influencing people's social communications and institutional bodies and in the corporate sector (van Dijck and Poell, 2013: 2).

In South Africa, organisations evolve and adapt to the ever-changing communication platforms to understand and cater to the general public's needs and concerns. Organisations depend on people to respond to the work they put out. The public only responds if they feel considered and engaged by an organisation, which strongly depends on its relationship with its audience.

The non-profit division proceeds to grow tremendously in Africa and globally. More than two hundred non-profit organisations are registered in South Africa alone. This number has increased, representing over 200% over the past decade (Radebe and Nkonyeni, 2020a).

Being positioned in the Global South affords organisations in South Africa with diversity, a deeper understanding and connection to different values, and a range of communication freedoms. Steyn and Puth (2000:55) state that the organisation's members' commitment and energy are fuelled by the values that drive the organisation.

The study assessed how faith-based NGOs increase awareness on climate change use social media to communicate with their external stakeholder groups.

1.2 Background to the research problem

Many studies on social media and its role in stakeholder communication have been conducted. Having information at one's disposal is essential; it ranks high and is influential in today's society. Communications has become instantaneous, inclusive and mobile (Donath and Boyd, 2004:71).

Carboni and Maxwell (2015) found that social media can increase the engagement of stakeholders. Specifically, the use of social media can improve dialogue with stakeholders in a low-cost public arena. In his master's dissertation, Kilonda (2013:1) states that traditional media used to be a dominant carrier for corporate communications before the arrival of new media. However, since the development of new technologies, social media's technical inclinations put publishing in the hands of people, democratising communication and making it easy and possible for everyone to distribute information, share and interact; therefore, social media has been recognised as a robust tool for stakeholder engagement as a result of these capacities.

Digital social media networks have changed the way people communicate with each other; digital communication tools have made communication accessible and shifted communication from a distribution focus to a conversational one (Donath and Boyd, 2004).

Render (2009:7) states that social media substantially impacts how stakeholders associate with brands and how organisations do business. Since 2010, we have seen the growth in social media profiles owned by non-profit organisations to deepen relationships with stakeholders and the public (van Dijck and Poell, 2013).

These organisations have been exploring more than the given (free) features of these social networks, such as regular post scheduling, tagging and image sharing and go as far as paying for specialised and more targeted services. Despite being relatively old in the communications space, social media offers different services that enable organisations to target their audiences, track the number of people interacting, their location, and algorithms.

Social media platforms seem to provide an instant response solution to organisations to bridge a gap of face-to-face interaction. They offer a viable channel of interaction between two important players. Wasike and Cook (2010:1) described Facebook as a “never before platform to have so many people gathered to communicate through a single medium and personal level”.

Short videos and graphics interchange format (GIFS) are now utilised to strengthen relationships formed in the online community space. These virtual spaces backup instant responses as they link the organisation, audience and content published. Organisations have maintained these relationships by posting regularly and content that is appealing to their audience.

In contrast to what most research suggests about the success of social media for stakeholder communication in the NGO division, the question is that do faith-base environmental entities use social media as a channel for meaningful connections and forge relationships that will create patterns worth of support.

The topic of discussion is a study of organisations communication tools if they allow the audience and stakeholders to interact with them.

Communications online essentially differ from in-person interactions. Networking online offers possibilities for less limiting communication. Users may publish in levels considerably different than their in-person conversations. This signals that environmental NGO's have not fully invested in social media as a primary mechanism

of communication and exploring the depth of relationships they can build with either their audience or donors (Debatin, Bernhard, Lovejoy *et al.*, 2009:83).

1.3 Statement of the research problem

Environmental NGOs are failing to utilise social media platforms to communicate with stakeholders and mobilise opportunities effectively. A study conducted by Nchabeleng (2018:150) indicates that insufficient funds and insufficient staff knowledge hinder the ability of an organisation to plan and execute a successful social media strategy, which indicates NGOs were slow to adopt new technologies. Organisations often miss networking and communication opportunities with the youth through social media when social media is viewed as an addition to the budget, (Nchabeleng, Botha and Bisschoff, 2018).

The debate that NGO's are not meeting maximum social media expectancy is ongoing and can be described in terms of Steyn and Puth's (2002) perspective as being a corporate communications issue whereby there is too little communication with external stakeholders. The use of social media by environmental faith based NGO's could also be a result to the overall use of social media nationally by the NGO sector, Nchabeleng, Botha and Bisschoff (2018) also state that social media use by NGOs in South Africa is slower than the growth rate of social media in South Africa for general communication.

While the studies mentioned above have dealt with the role of social media in communication strategies in general and its employment for information dissemination, there are limited studies that focus on social media's role in environmental NGOs, especially those that target young people between the ages of 18-35 years. Communication surrounding climate justice and action is primarily technical and may seem difficult to understand at face value. For this reason, environmental NGO's have a hard time reaching young people who are looking for short and sharp communication.

In a world of climate action, research that will engage communication managers on ways to improve interaction with stakeholders, especially young people, may be a turning point

in response to climate justice; in an article published by the United Nations (2021), it is stated that young people are not only affected by climate change. They add value and contribute to climate action.

Young people use their skills and step up their efforts to accelerate climate action through education, science, and technology. They are proactive entrepreneurs and innovators. This study is set to bridge the gap of social media communications in the body of knowledge in communications related to the faith-based environmental NGO sector.

The faith-based sector serves a vital role in community relations; this group's communication is widely spread. In the eco-justice industry, faith-based organisations have managed to bring about change and challenge some complex cases through contact with society and government. In 2014, the South African government signed a deal with Russia-owned nuclear cooperation to procure a trillion-rand nuclear deal, which they believed to manipulate the government decision-making process. These two organisations believed this deal would cause a long-lasting debt for South African Citizens. SAFCEI and Earth Life Africa took the government to court and won the case against the South African government; these are the actions that demonstrate faith-based organisations' importance and impact on society.

1.4 Aim and objectives of the research

This study aims to explore Assessing the use of social media for stakeholder communication in the Environmental and Assessing the use of social media for stakeholder communication in the Environmental and Faith-based NGO sector. Faith-based NGO sector. This means:

1. Investigate how social media is used as a tool to communicate with stakeholders
2. Determining what channels and methods are not used to their maximum ability by the organisation for a wider reach,
3. Determining the effectiveness of social media communication to advocate for climate change.

1.5 Research questions

The primary research question of the study:

What is the use of social media in stakeholder communication for faith-based environmental NGOs when interacting with young people between 18-35?

The sub-questions are as follows:

4. What is stakeholder communication in the environmental NGO sector,
5. What is the faith-based NGO's perception of social media communication?
6. What is the rationale for using social media in environmental NGOs to raise awareness for eco-justice
7. What is the perception of young people about environmental NGOs and the use of social media to communicate?

1.6 Significance of the research

This study aims to contribute to knowledge about social media communication, specifically in the environmental NGO sector. Results from this study could assist NGO's to develop a strengthened communication strategy, especially for a targeted group like youth. Furthermore, it could increase engagement to enable small organisations to form relationships through participation and engagement in social media

1.7 Chapter Outline

This short research thesis is made up of five chapters. Each of the chapters is structured to respond to the research question. Online tools such as social media provide new opportunities for citizens and stakeholders.

Chapter 1 details the study in full fact with an introduction and background of the research and some existing studies that inform the research topic. This chapter covers the objectives of the study, research questions, its significance and strengths and limitations. It also highlights the research problem by reasoning why this particular topic needs resolution and its purpose.

Chapter 2 dives into text and literature that speaks to the study and already exists. This chapter underlines the introduction of the internet the root of social media. It further discusses the number of internet users in South Africa to bring us back into the focus of the study. This further chapter details social media, how it is used by NGO's as well as the NGO sector in South Africa.

Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology and other methods used to qualify the study. It details how the study material was formulated and how data was collected, sampled, and analysed. At the end of the study, a discussion around ethical consideration is described and responded to consent and permissions issues.

Chapter 4 presents data findings of the study

Chapter 5: includes a discussion of the results, analysing the data received by the researcher. The findings from this chapter are divided into four themes that address the research question.

Chapter 6 includes the conclusion for the study, and the researcher gives recommendations and a summary of the findings and states possible further research.

2: Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

The 20th century brought TV, radio, and the internet, which significantly impacted on the practice of communications. This aspect has played an essential part in the strategies and tactics of how knowledge management hubs would carry out a communication piece. Breakenridge (2008:1) states that PR professionals must read, be knowledgeable about, and stay extremely well versed in the markets their brands try to reach.

According to Norcross (2018), even though the internet has been around for over 30 years, users are still growing, with more technologies conceived. For information hubs, this means one thing: the internet is one of the most powerful communication tools.

According to Data Reportal (2021), South Africa's internet population increased by 1.7 million (+4.5%) between 2020 and 2021. Many factors contributed to the increase; however, due to COVID19, all interaction was moved to virtual platforms. Even the rural communities of South Africa have had to adapt to a new way of staying in touch with their respective organisations. In return, organisations are more creative with how they use the internet to bridge the gap of in-person communication.

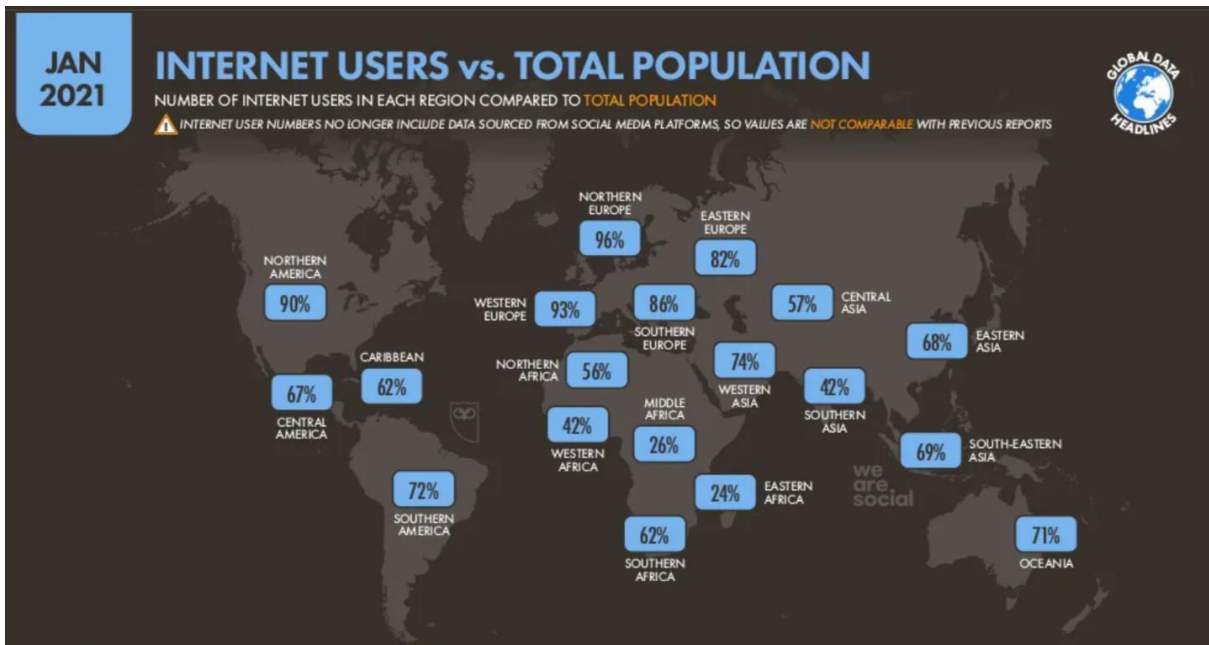


Figure 1: Internet user vs population in the world.

Data Reportal (2021)

2.2 Social Media

Houghton, Pattern & Newson (2009:184) define social media as tools and utilities that enable the sharing, collaborating, and communication of information online. In Lipschultz' (2017:11) opinion, these online platforms have assisted many small and medium businesses with their positioning and marketing strategies and have helped networked individuals engage in interpersonal, but mediated, communication.

Hopkins (2017:1) states that social media are channels in the internet allowing people to communicate opportunistically with the ability to present themselves either asynchronously selectively or in real-time to a broad and narrow audience of people who value user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others. He further explains that digital platforms, apps and services built for merging content sharing, open communication and personal connection are categorised as social media technologies.

Social media has been one of the tools that have played a pivotal role in any institution because it is the most direct mass communication mechanism between the organisation and the public. Organisations that want to remain consistently successful must adapt to the evolving trends people follow and consider the people's needs.

In their study Nchabeleng, Botha and Bisschoff (2018:150) mention that Statistics South Africa published that South Africa's general public is 55.21 million people, with 66 per cent of the population living in cities. There are 28.6 million internet users in South Africa, with 15 million of them using social media platforms. Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have all enjoyed rapid growth; Facebook just revealed that it has over 1.32 billion daily engaged users and over 2 billion monthly active users.

A study conducted by Allen (2019) states that social media's effect in our lives has grown dramatically in the last decade and a half. The growth in the number of individuals using Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and other social media platforms, as well as the time spent on them, has resulted in the interest of policymakers, teachers, parents, and clinicians concerned about the effects of social media in our lives and psychological well-being.

As new kinds of social media develop, it is increasingly important for public relations professionals to learn how to use these tools in their work (Curtis *et al.*, 2010). Social media plays an essential role in the strategies and tactics of how an organisation remains on its stakeholders' lips. The honest dialogue provided by social media allows businesses to understand their customers' demands and drive them to respond quickly and effectively to those needs (Tajudeen, Jaafar and Ainin, 2018:1). It's clear that corporate communications today depend on social media to keep customers updated on what's going on.

Further than press releases, several businesses have attempted to not only inform but also engage customers by involving them in business operations, attracting them to physical places through Internet-based incentives, and creating a sense of exclusivity for social media users (Noor Al-Deen and Hendricks John Allen, 2011).

Blake Morgan, a senior contributor at Forbes Magazine (2019) wrote about the most customer-centric companies and states that consumer experience is essential to many organisations, from adopting new technologies to receiving feedback and creating partnerships.

2.3 NGO sector in South Africa

The word non-profit organisation (NPO) is a comprehensive notion interpreted and expressed differently by different groups. As a result, it has been referred to by a variety of terms. They include civil society, trusts, foundations, charities, volunteer associations, advocacy groups, charitable groups, and non-governmental organisations, (Smith, David Horton Stebbins Robert A. Dover, 2010). The term 'NGO' refers to any non-profit organisation not affiliated with the government and is defined as a values-based organisation.

In South Africa, a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) or Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) is defined as a “trust, company, or other association of persons founded for a public purpose and whose revenue and assets are not distributed to its members or office bearers except as reasonable compensation for services rendered under section 1 of the NPO Act” (Department of Social Development, 2019).

In research conducted by (Choto, Iwu and Tengeh, 2020), they found that based on the historical foundation for the development of NPOs in South Africa, the apartheid era in South Africa exposed African people to prejudice and persecution. The first constitution, which was adopted in 1910, resulted in a tremendous lot of inequity, (Jagwanth, 2003).

During this period in 1948, policies favoured the already affluent white populace (Kumaran et al., 2012:34). Non-governmental organisations (NPOs) were formed as a result of apartheid's inequities. Non-profit organisations helped disenfranchised people. NPOs, for example, were crucial in reaching out to people who had been refused treatment by the apartheid government, particularly in the healthcare sector.

According to Mazibuko (2013), the late Steve Biko and Dr Ramphela Mamphela founded a health clinic in the Eastern Cape during apartheid to provide healthcare. In addition, mobile clinics were developed as part of a non-profit enterprise called the Black People Convention to help underprivileged areas.

According to News24 (2017), there are over 100 000 registered non-profit organisations in South Africa. According to the survey done by The Mail and Guardian (2020), the number of NGOs in South Africa has increased by more than 200 per cent in the last ten years. Voluntary community-based organisations account for 95 per cent of the industry, with non-profit organisations and trustees accounting for the remaining 5 per cent. Furthermore, an estimated 50,000 non-profit organisations are unregistered. Education non-profits make up roughly 6 per cent of the NGO industry (Volmink and Van der Elst, 2017).

The non-profit sector in South Africa plays an essential role in assisting the government in achieving its constitutional responsibility, in December 2021, the #oceansnotoil movement and its allies successfully stopped seismic surveys by a major gas corporation on South Africa's wild coast, reminding the government of its COP26 vow to protect and restore ecosystems. According to an article published by the organisation, the urgent interdict is a testament to indigenous peoples possibly most harmed by the gas company's impunity rising to defend their legacy, (OCEANSNOTOIL, 2021).

Several socio-economic rights are enshrined in the South African Constitution's Bill of Rights. As stated in the preamble, the goal of these rights is to improve the standard of living for all residents and unleash each individual's full potential. Without a vibrant non-profit sector, most South Africans would be unable to exercise their socio-economic rights. In its National Development Plan, the South African government has conceded: "All provinces rely heavily on not-for-profit organisations to deliver services."

The National Development Plan further states: "In social welfare services, the state has adopted a partnership model of service provision and relies mainly on non-

governmental welfare organisations to provide professional social services" (Wyngaard, 2013).

This partnership approach is adopted in light of the fact that the non-profit sector in South Africa is primarily made up of smaller informal/voluntary organisations. During the 2011 fiscal year, voluntary associations accounted for 95 per cent of all organisations registered under the NPO Act. The Department of Social Development concludes in its 2011 report:

"For the community-based organisations, registration not only adds to their credibility in the eyes of donors and community but also sets a basis for the way in which they are run. Therefore, the NPO registration sets a much-needed foundation for organisations to run their affairs effectively and accountably."

Nqaba and Mathews (2017) state that while it is evident that the number and influence of NGOs in Africa have grown over the last few decades, it is important to note that there are some concerns around declining funding for NGOs generally and for South African NGOs in particular. Regardless of the likely effects of these recent funding downturns, it is evident that NGOs today play a significant role on the African continent. However, it is not all that clear exactly which organisations are considered to fall under the umbrella term 'NGO.'

NGO Pulse (2018) reveals that NGOs in South Africa face many inherent shortcomings and constraints arising from official frameworks and support mechanisms used by the democratic developmental state post-apartheid to strengthen NGOs. NGOs in South Africa confronted unique obstacles that NGOs did not share in other African countries. This is because donor funding changed as a result of the democratic transition in 1994.

2.4 Faith-based NPO's/NGO's

The relevance of faith-based NGO's in society has been the past couple of years in question. In a series of podcasts about the state of religious NGO's (2017), currently, the producer states that religious non-governmental organisations serve an essential

purpose in service delivery, community organisation, advocacy, and moderating information and resource flows around the world.

Their religious character can amplify the scope of specific programs while also complicating the already tumultuous policy context in which NGOs operate. While policy frameworks govern the types of activities religious NGOs can engage in and seek to govern behaviour, how this happens in practice is an empirical matter.

In a survey conducted by The Guardian (2015), the participants claimed that religion was firmly ingrained in many communities; hence, religious NGOs had a place worldwide in the twenty-first century. As a result, it made sense for faith-based non-governmental organisations to work in those areas.

2.5 Social media as a tool of communication

We usually think of Facebook and Twitter when we think of social media. However, it is more than that in actuality. Audio and visual messages were arguably the first techniques to communicate messages over large distances. (Baruah, 2012). The introduction of social media impacted the ability of organisations to build solid relationships from social interaction. Baruah (2012) argues that lately, it has been observed that the majority of businesses use social networking to promote their products and services.

To have a growing audience, it is wise for organisations to offer connections and resources to the public through communication platforms. Organisations can use social media platforms to have interactions with both internal and external audiences. Stakeholders benefit from social media since it makes it easier to act as watchdogs and track corporations that engage in unethical communication practices, (Curtis *et al.*, 2010).

As a result, businesses cannot simply abandon social media channels; they must be more visible than ever to stimulate discussions with stakeholders. "The value of social media is that users are highly engaged and wanted to be heard" (Burston- Marsteller, 2010: 2) (Gomez-vasquez, 2011).

Most young people have multiple social media applications, and they know how to use these tools to their total capacity, including instant responses. With young people being the centre of social media, a study conducted by the PewResearch Centre indicates that 88% of participants between the ages of 18 to 29 indicated using one of social media platforms. Seventy-eight per cent of 30- to 49- year-olds also subscribe to one or more social media applications. Participants between the ages of 50 and 64, use social media regularly; this may come as a strange fact considering that this generation grew up without the internet.

Organisations must aim to have platforms where people can interact with them or each other. Monica and Jing (2018) argue that youth can now communicate with people instantly and share their lives through photographs, videos, and status updates through social media. Young people describe these platforms as necessary tools for establishing and maintaining relationships, being creative, and knowing more about the world.

It seems as if when an organisation establishes an online presence, it becomes more visible, which can promote work. The more people attracted, the more effective communication is.

Including links to pertinent material and relevant online content, documentation extends the organisation's credibility, which search engines notice, resulting in more coverage. According to Taylor, Kent and White (2001), pages with dialogic cycles include features such as the ability for visitors to send messages to the organisation, the ability for individuals to vote on issues, the ability to ask for frequently updated information, and the option for visitors to complete surveys recognising priorities and conveying views on issues.

The difference between organisations with exponential communication growth and those that do not is retaining, maintaining and nurturing existing relationships. According to Taylor (2001), any successful/ongoing relationship is built on repetitive interactions and communication.

Keeping in touch with an audience earns organisations loyalty. Having a significant member retention results in referral from one person to the other; this allows communication practitioners to track trends their audience follows, identify a target market and generate data. Data collected by analysing trends an audience follows increases formation and strengthens communication strategies; for instance, a piece of more targeted information can be offered to influence people to return and join.

One of the essential frameworks for envisioning the organisation–public connection is dialogue, which is increasingly being termed as such. The internet is gradually being referred to as one of the most important tools available to activists and non-profit organisations.

Social media affords organisations almost an instant reaction to how the public feels about their information, which helps writers structure content they know users will engage on. This type of communication framework, therefore, ensures a stable relationship between the organisation and the public. This study has provided perspective into the usage of the Web for dialogic objectives by combining both of these domains, (Taylor, Kent and White, 2001).

2.6 Use of social media by NGOs

The importance of businesses engaging interest groups has been proven in both theory and reality. Organisations are being asked to take on more responsibility for a variety of social and environmental issues. Customer service, marketing, internal communications, public relations, and corporate social responsibility are among the many uses for which social media is being embraced and utilised by businesses worldwide. Social media alters the way stakeholders and businesses communicate

regularly, allowing for collaboration, participation, interactivity, and engagement. (Gomez-vasquez, 2011).

NGO's have also had to adapt social media practices. A student-run visual media collective named We Are World Change (2019) states that organisations can use social media to interact with their audience, engage them in activities and grow into a global movement.

All of these intentions are centred around building relationships with stakeholders and maintaining interaction not only for social media growth but the growth of the organisation as a whole. Organisations are now measuring some of their success by the rate of reach, hit and return from social media.

The South African Social Media Landscape (2018) study indicates that the number of Facebook users in South Africa has increased by 14 per cent since 2016 (from 14 to 16 million), 14 million of them use their mobile devices to browse social media (Nchabeleng, Botha and Bisschoff, 2018).

As of January 2021, South Africa had 38.13 million active internet users. The great majority (almost 36 million) used mobile internet as well. During the same period, it was observed that nearly all social media users got their accounts using their mobile phones; see figure below.

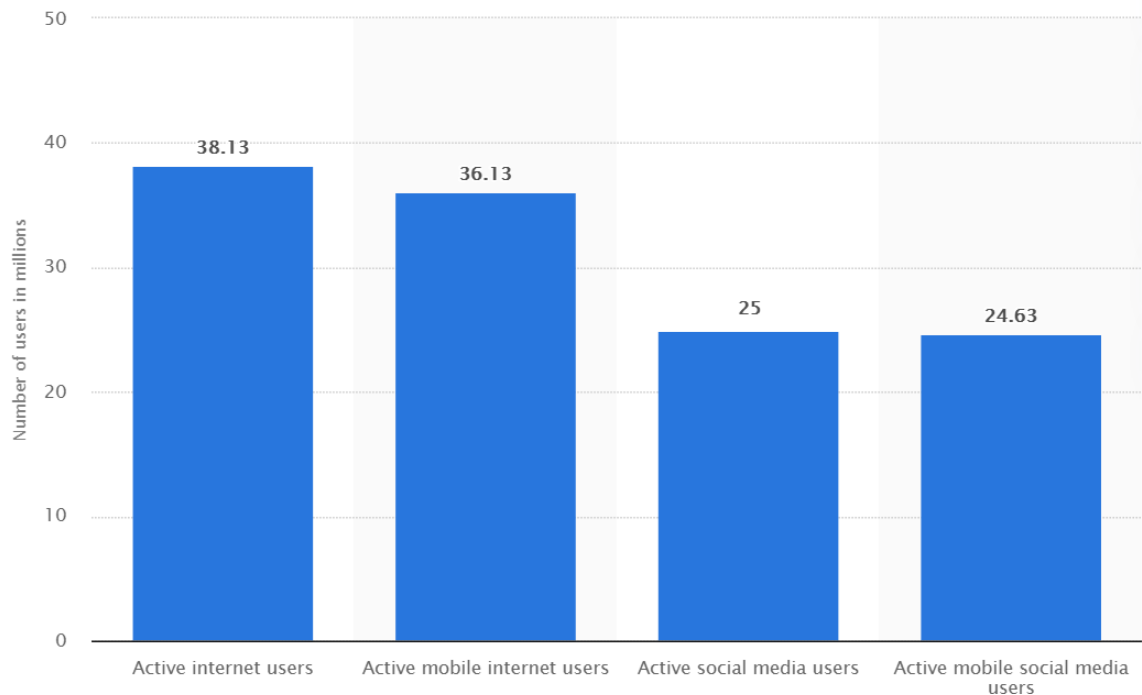


Figure 2: Digital population in South Africa as of January 2021 supplied by statista

There are factors, especially legal, that guide organisations on the ethical use of social media and handling of the public’s personal information. They are expected to contribute meaningfully to the solution of a range of social and environmental concerns in addition to conforming to rules and regulations and acting ethically (Lutz and Hoffmann, 2013).

The power of social media is transforming how non-profit organisations accomplish their missions (Pulse NGO, 2009). Because of the rapid expansion in the use of social media by organisations, NGOs have been able to use these tools to publish information, build public communications infrastructure, and manage natural and social catastrophes (Alonso-Cañadas *et al.*, 2019).

The various social tools available today are incredibly cost-effective compared to conventional tactics such as email and internet advertising, and they are revolutionising the way businesses interact (Baruah, 2012). Online communication devices can make

us more aware of our professional and social relationships' movements. Twitter, for example, provides us with a sight of what individuals we know are up to at any given moment.

Danyi and Chaudhri (2018) state that NGOs can use social media channels to engage with their audiences, create awareness, and push for change. The goal of social media management, which entails the day-to-day administration and management of an organisation's social media channels and communication, is to maintain successful social media communication that aids in achieving the organisation's objectives.

According to Ihm (2019), research on non-profit organisations use of social media's dialogic qualities to promote organisation–stakeholder connections and elicit stakeholder reactions has focused on non-profits' social media strategy. Bellucci & Manetti (2016), feel that social media and social networks are effective tools for reaching and maintaining in contact with a large number of stakeholders, ensuring a low-cost participatory discussion. Companies worldwide have been baffled by customer demand for social media sites like YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook in recent years. Though some businesses continue to struggle to garner "fans" and "following," there are a few that have gotten it right (Noor Al-Deen and Hendricks John Allen, 2011).

Collaboration, sharing, involvement, and empowerment, among other values, are at the heart of social media's ability in distributing information. Because social media has altered how businesses engage with their stakeholders, it is critical that businesses learn how to utilise this new medium, particularly for communication purposes (Gomez-vasquez, 2011).

Nchabeleng, Botha and Bisschoff (2018), in their study, found that it was clear that the internet had transformed the way NGOs handled public relations. During their interviews, participants expressed a variety of viewpoints and ideas on their favourite platforms; on the one hand, participants positively stated that social media platforms made it easier to do customer research and surveys. They also praised the simplicity with which information on websites can be accessed. Some participants, on the other

hand, were sceptical about the thought of losing control over information. These findings come as no shock, especially when looking at the preferred medium of interaction between organisations and the public.

2.7 Chapter conclusion

This chapter discusses the origin of social media at large and how scholars view and describe it. It also looks into how it fits into the world of corporate communications. In this chapter, the researcher understands the magnitude of social media and the impact it has on the communications strategies of NGO's in general but specifically in South Africa. The researcher discovers how social media is used differently by organisations as a primary tool of communication and how that establishes relationships between the organisation and different stakeholders, who in this study are young people between the ages of 18-35. This chapter further uncovers the digital population in South Africa, ranging from active internet users to active mobile social media users.

3: Chapter 3: Research methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter deliberates the research methodology and methods used to conduct this study. The study was carried through a qualitative research methodology technique. According to (Silverman, 2010) qualitative research methodology results in exploratory data generated from the analysis of attitudes and behaviours that are best understood in their natural environments. It also enables the study to get expert insight or information on the subjects under investigation by understanding the perspectives of social actors, retrieving past experiences, and gaining expert insight or information.

This study looks into social media communications of two faith-based environmental NGO's based in Cape Town, Western Cape operating in Southern Africa. The study employed a purposive sampling technique to target participants. Qualitative content analysis was used along with other methods to analyse data.

3.2 Research design

When a conclusion is correct or authentic, research is reliable, and research design is the conceptual plan for conducting research (Akhtar, 2016). Research design is an outline of research methods employed by the researcher to mark the study, and it allows the researcher to refine their study. According to Akhtar (2016), a research design must be based on a coherent methodology. It should be created after the study topic and problem has been chosen and developed, the objectives have been effectively specified, ideas have been properly defined, and the hypothesis has been properly constructed. Answers to the following questions should be provided by the research design:

1. What is the study about and, what type of data is required?
2. What is the purpose of the study?
3. What are the sources of needed data?
4. What should be the place or area of the study?
5. What time, approximately, is required for the study?
6. What should be the amount of materials or number of cases for the study?
7. What type of sampling should be used?
8. What method of data collection would be appropriate?
9. How will data be analysed?
10. What should be the approximate expenditure?
11. What should be the specific nature of the study?

3.3 Research methodology

The research approach that was taken up for this study is the qualitative research methodology. According to Hammarberg (2016), this method is used to respond to questions about experience, meaning, and perspective from the participant's standpoint. Shoshanna (2002) states that quality measures, the development and dissemination of comparative quality reports, and quality improvement efforts can all benefit from applying a solid qualitative research methodology.

According to (Hennink, Hutter and Ajay, 2020), the formation of a research topic and study objectives is the first step in qualitative research. The scientific literature, existing theory, findings of previous empirical research, and, when using a participatory approach, participants' and stakeholders' viewpoints on what research is relevant and needed are all used to design and refine research topics.

In-depth interviews to understand a circumstance, encounter, or event from a personal perspective; and 'analysis of texts and documents, such as government reports, media

articles, and websites are all examples of qualitative research techniques, (Hammarberg, Kirkman and De Lacey, 2016). The researcher could use qualitative research to interpret and describe people's actions. (Brynard, Hanekom and Brynard, 2014).

The researcher used the qualitative approach to attain and evaluate data to understand the expectations of young people of faith-based social media communications. By employing the qualitative research approach, the researcher conversed with the study respondents (young people and social media managers) to gain more insight into the topic. The qualitative approach allowed the researcher to note the respondents' view on what messaging will appeal to them. This approach was best fitting for this study as opposed to quantitative as it was looking to understand young people's views and perceptions.

The approach also extracted the relevant information needed to answer the research question and provided opinions that were helpful to communication managers when constructing social media messaging. Hammarberg (2016) states that qualitative research is not a one-size-fits-all solution or a collection of tales, as it is often portrayed. Frequently, a complex theoretical or philosophical framework is involved.

In this context of the study, the researcher looked at how young people affiliated with the two organisations think of the current social media efforts presented to them and how both organisations think of social media as communications tools and what they do with them currently. The approach complemented the study as it helps to understand opinions and realities of social media communications weighed from a small group of participants.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

The researcher gathered data through interviews, questionnaires and social media posts and found responses to the research questions and objectives. These methods provided better results for the research to get personal views on social media communication between these organisations and young people.

3.5 Sampling Process

The organisations - Southern African Faith Communities Institute (SAFCEI) and the Anglican Environmental Network of Southern Africa (Green Anglicans) operate in Southern Africa in the climate change sector and educate young people on eco-justice and care for creation. Their headquarters are based in Cape Town, South Africa; the study targeted only the staff members and stakeholders of both organisations based in Cape Town, who have access to the internet. These organisations were a sufficient foundation for this study to represent a larger scope of faith-based environmental NGOs as they engage in multi-faith communities and internationally. The two organisations serve in all multi-faith communities in Southern Africa, including all Anglican Church's (Episcopal) around the world.

In recruiting the participants for the study, the researcher used the purposive sampling technique. This sampling method allowed the researcher to access a particular group of people. All study participants were selected because they fit a profile of either a young person or someone working in the environmental organisations used in the study.

The young individuals chosen for this study come from Swaziland, Mozambique, South Africa, and Namibia, among other countries in Southern Africa, consisting of four males and six females affiliated to both organisations. These are some of the countries where both organisations are active.

The study's social media managers are either SAFCEI or Green Anglicans staff. They either administer the community or curate the organisation's material and graphics. Managing social media is one of the tasks in overall communications, but it is not the only one. For this function, neither of these social media managers pursued specialised training.

Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that is best efficient when studying a specific cultural topic with experts. (Tongco, 2007). This process of interviewing participants including sending and receiving feedback from the questionnaires took up to a maximum of 4 weeks (28 days) due to the availability of the participants. Social media posts were monitored for a period of 8 weeks (56 days).

3.6 Interviews

To collect data from the organisations, interviews were conducted with one organisational coordinator, one social media manager or communication manager from both the Southern African Faith Communities Environment Institute (SAFCEI) and the Anglican Environmental Network (Green Anglicans). This study looked for meaning constructed through experiences when using social media as a communication tool.

In application to this study, these interviews were aimed to establish what role does social media play in stakeholder communication for environmental NGO's when interacting with young people and establish if sustainable relationships could be built through social media so that young people keep coming back to their pages to interact and start advocating for climate justice and assist in marketing and sharing messages.

The content was obtained through a series of questions posed to the participants and social media managers.

A video conferencing service (Zoom/Skype/Blackboard) was used to conduct and record interviews, and the researcher also took notes. This method allowed the

researcher to ask follow-up questions that rose from responses given by respondents, which informed further insight for the study. Before recording each interview – the researcher asked for permission from the participants and explained how the recording would be used for the research and that their responses would form part of a study.

3.7 Qualitative Content analysis

The qualitative data in this study was analysed using Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA). It is a systematic and objective approach to describing and characterising phenomena as a research method. (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992) (Schreier, 2012). According to Cavanagh (1997), reducing data to concepts that explain the research phenomenon is a prerequisite for successful content analysis.

In relevance to this research, QCA was employed when analysing language, visual and messaging relevant to the study's topic. Two social media (Facebook and Instagram) used by both organisations were identified and were a focus for this study. The researcher examined both organisations' social media posts and compiled data using qualitative content analysis (QCA), which allowed the researcher to analyse information posted on their channels.

These social media platforms were assessed for two months; the researcher aimed to determine and analyse engagement from these platforms' communication. The researcher examined text and images posted concerning eco-justice, responses and conversations that stem from the post.

Therefore, the text and image analysis responded to whether climate change language, particularly jargon, and the choice of imagery cause non-participation from young people. Non-participation can be classified as having no interest in climate justice, compared to young people seeking clarification on climate change, participating in environmental campaigns, and responding to calls to advocate and other means of supporting the movement.

3.8 Questionnaires

In response to the secondary aim of this research on highlighting strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats brought by social media, open question questionnaire was sent to the stakeholders of both organisations. One questionnaire was sent to ten stakeholders (young people) via WhatsApp and email. According to McGuirk and O'Neill (2005), questionnaires pose a set of uniform, organised questions to a group of people, usually a representative general population sample. Questionnaires assist in collecting raw data about people, their behaviour, experiences and social interactions, feelings and perceptions, and event awareness (McLafferty, 2010).

The young people identified for this study come from different parts of Southern African region where both organisations operate and are following their social media channels. The multi-country recruitment of young people was necessary for the study so to understand the context of reach, diversity and perspective.

This method allowed stakeholders and organisations to weigh their experiences and opinions on social media's effectiveness as a communication tool. The questionnaire consisted of a maximum of ten questions that were looking to explore the experience on the current use of social media, looking at the lows and highs, what has worked and what has not; participants were given seven days to respond and submit their responses to the researcher.

3.9 Analytic process

Participants

The researcher acquired information by interviewing three social media managers from the organisations and sending a questionnaire to the study's participants (youth). The researcher used thematic analysis to sort through the data to define the participants' thoughts about social media and its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Bruan and Clarke (2014:37) believe that thorough thematic analysis can yield reliable and insightful results.

The researcher read the data, listened to recorded interviews numerous times to familiarise with the content said or written and begin to look at patterns.

The researcher transcribed the interviews and began mapping out specific patterns that appeared from responses. This process of weeding through data provided answers to the studies' objectives. The researcher then developed a framework by identifying concepts and phrases and assigning codes to them, such as negative and positive responses and terminology. Information was organised and coded according to themes and patterns.

When the data was structured and coded, the researcher identified the most common responses to answer the research questions.

Social Media

The researcher looked at all social media posts on twitter, Facebook and Instagram from both organisations over a period of 8 weeks and collated information. Through qualitative content analysis (QCA) allowed the researcher to analyse material found on social media.

The textual analysis included taking a look at captions and their relationship to the climate crisis. The researcher noted messages that contained terms like climate change, disasters and economy, identified words or phrases that appear next to them such as adaptation, resilience and future, and analysed the meanings of their relationships better to understand the intentions and targets of different captions. This analysis informed the terminology used often to deliver messages from the organisations; this knowledge was essential for the study as it determined how young people respond to different climate technical posts and general climate posts.

The researcher looked at the different images used to accompany captions. The image analysis included noting down if images related to the caption and how much they spread the message. The researcher looked at the categorisation of images containing people, infographics and landmarks such as nuclear plants, environmental faith leaders, and descriptions of climate change; if well-categorised, object recognition shows all the images posted and those that are similar. Images posted will also appear on discovery pages.

Questionnaire

The researcher looked at questionnaire and began noting down patterns and themes that came out of the responses of the young people. The researcher also looked at the recommendations of the study participants over the use of social media as the best way to communicate with them.

3.10 Ethical considerations

Individuals, communities, and the environment are all protected by ethical behaviour, raising the level of good in the world (Israel and Iain, 2006:2). To sustain truth and integrity in research, ethics are essential. Flick (2018) states that ethics addresses what morally relevant influences researchers' actions may have on the individuals with or about whom they conduct the study.

The researcher obtained permission from all contributors and participants including the young people who responded to the questionnaire in the study region before beginning the investigation. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, and goal and those who wanted to withdraw were informed of their right to do so. A letter to both organisations was received and presented to the university, asking for permission to utilise the material provided as part of the findings and a signed letter of support from both organisations.

The participants were given access to off-the-record material that informed secondary questions and outcomes. Throughout the study, confidentiality was maintained at all times, particularly during interviews. At the start of the interview, participants were informed that their comments would be recorded and utilized in the study. Not all participants that were identified for the interview participated. One of the respondents fell ill and was replaced by a colleague.

There was no discrimination based on sex, colour, ethnicity, or other characteristics that could influence the findings and outcomes during the study. The research focused on faith-based organisations that strongly believe in nature being part of God's creation; as expected, the science behind the formation and sustainability of the environment did arise as an ethical issue that may need ethical delicacy and was managed seamlessly.

The structure of the study was communicated with the contributors and participants. Ethical clearance was applied for through the Cape Peninsula University of Technology's Informatics and Design Faculty Ethics Committee and was granted before the study commenced.

3.11 Delineation of the research

The study is limited to environmental NGOs based in Cape Town that supports international climate change responses through policy and knowledge interventions and partnerships. Out of all the organisations in Cape Town working in this sector, the study only focuses on two: The Anglican Environmental Network (Green Anglicans) and the Southern African Faith Environmental Institute (SAFCEI).

The study is limited to these two NGOs because no more than two organisations were needed to get the breadth and scope of response required to answer the study question, these two were the best fit because they consented to participate and contribute their resources and data. Additionally, only people who are affiliated with these organisations and their partners took part in the study. The study only focused on the organisations' Twitter and Facebook pages and did not look into the LinkedIn and WhatsApp profiles.

3.12 Chapter conclusion

This chapter outlined methods and frameworks employed by the researcher to understand the use of social media as a tool of communication by the two organisations identified for the study. The research methodology was laid out in this chapter, accompanied by sampling methods, data collection and analysis of the information presented by the study. Ethical considerations were established in this chapter as well as permissions and consent documentation necessary for the study to be conducted.

4: Chapter 4: Research Findings and Discussions

4.1 Introduction

The main reason for this study is to examine the use of social media by faith-based environmental NGO's based in Cape Town and how they communicate with their stakeholders. The research primarily focuses on young people between the ages of 18-35 who are affiliated with the organisations.

With textual and questionnaire analysis, this study sought to understand if these platforms are used adequately by faith-based organisations to create and maintain relationships with the young people; are they reaching them, does the interaction exist, what do the people who manage these social media pages think about social media and lastly what do the young people think about social media as means of communicating with them. This chapter lays and presents the analysis and results of the study.

The data combined for this analysis is obtained from interviews conducted with social media managers and content from a questionnaire to the young people affiliated with these organisations. Data in the study is presented in a narrative format using quotes, and the researcher paraphrases some content from the interviews and questionnaire.

The research presents findings from two NGO's that are selected in fulfilment of the study (SAFCEI and GREEN Anglicans). Thematic analysis, coding and categorising is used to analyse the data collected to group data into themes.

Results will be grouped into four themes, illustrated below and are discussed further. The youth will be coded as (Respondents), and social media managers of the organisation will be coded as (SMM)

Theme 1: Efficiency

- The convenience of social media
- The reality

Theme 2: Preference

- Offline media vs online media
- Insights

Theme 3: Reach

- Inclusivity
- Integrity over creativity
- Faith restrictions
- Jargon

Theme 4: Engagement

- The need for social media
- Catching on trends

4.1.1 Theme 1: Efficiency

Convenience of social media

Social media has taken over the communications domain and has a long-lasting impact on the way people communicate and has become a central point of interaction; it has also increased awareness of what is happening in distant parts of the world; a global conversation can be launched through hashtags.

Social media brings the convenience of instant communication between two or more parties and provides information to people and audiences with little to no effort. The most critical aspect of social media is the ability to express your thoughts in a few characters and the instant response the audience receives from the communicator. The introductory questions looked at social media as means of communicating

Respondent 1: Social media has proven to be a powerful tool of communication because most people spend most of their time on social media daily. Actually, news spreads faster commonly it reaches social media before going to the traditional channels of communication.

Respondent 2: I think it's a great platform because it's easy and faster to communicate with people around the world

Respondent 3: It is perfect, and it can reach out to many in a short period

Respondent 6: Social media is an excellent tool of communication, and it is convenient and easy to use because most people use it to communicate with each other.

SMM 1: It creates discussions online that would have been discussed in person in the past with half the effort.

Respondents 1, 2, and 6 all agree on the turnaround time of social media as a communications platform. Social media manager 1 echoes this by emphasising that social media does lessen the time spent on topics. The critical thing highlighted by Respondent 1 addresses the amount of time spent on social media, especially for young people, and its potency to move news fast.

Respondent 2 states the reach of social media, concentrating on the global aspect of communication on social media. It previously took time on traditional media to achieve worldwide campaigns, whereas now, with just a hashtag, you can launch a campaign instantaneously.

Respondents 1 and 2 are from the Anglican Church of Southern Africa and are active youth members affiliated with the Green Anglicans Movement. Both follow and interact on the SAFCEI social media pages managed by Social Media Manager 1. And they both agree on the same values of social media as a social media tool.

Reality

It with no doubt that everything and anything with this much influence does have faults, participants were asked to speak about the realities of social media use.

Respondent 5: Social media has got both negative and positive. The negative aspect is that it has been abused to spread wrong or incomplete information about particular individuals, groups, institutions and organisations or specific subjects. It is also a powerful tool for cyberbullying. The positive aspect is that important and valuable information has been disseminated across the globe to bring positive change

Respondent 2: With social media, we are able to pass and get information fast and on time, but we don't have physical interaction any more; false news spread fast and social media bullying has taken over.

Respondents 5 and 2 share the same sentiments on the effects of social media with a strong positive on the fast spread of engagement and interaction; however, they both agree misinformation can quickly spread. It brings a different thought on the authenticity of social media's role in the overall message.

Respondent 4: Anyone can share breaking news making traditional communications irrelevant as people would be aware already. It takes away the authenticity of a news piece.

Respondent 4 addresses the relevance of what we know as traditional media, which van Dijck & Poell (2013) indicated that social media platforms profoundly impact people's informal contacts, institutional frameworks, and professional routines.

Respondent 1: Even though using social media as a communication tool brings problems such as fake news, it affects communications positively, changing the way we communicate for the better.

4.1.2 Theme 2: Preference

Offline media vs online media

Identifying platforms that bring in traffic is key to organisations and can develop relationships with the users and post relevant targeted information. The participants were asked about their preferences.

Respondent 5: It depends on the kind of information being disseminated. As a scholar and professional individual in the circular world, I take newsletters and websites as more authentic than social Media information. With that said, I equally use all the sources of information and do my best to verify if it's original before I share or use it. I take caution where the need is, even if I am not sure if it is authentic.

Respondent 4: All forms are essential for me to use as they help verify things; some things on social media are verified. Even websites and newsletters take news from it

Respondents 4 and 5 both state the importance of having a balance between offline and online media. Social media might be there to publish groundbreaking news. Still, an informative website will draw young people's interest and audiences who want quality content that provides something they did not have before.

Respondent 1: I think it is not a matter of preference, but options and cost-benefit. Social media platforms now are made so that you will do and get everything you want, from a simple conversation with friends to news or business. To say that social media has an advantage when it comes to preferences

Respondent 2: Yes, everything happens on the net now, and it's very resourceful and easy to use. There won't be a reason for me to go to the library because I can easily download the book I want

Respondents 1 and 2 clearly state that social media is their preference because of the easy scroll of information and is a cheaper way to receive news, suggesting that establishing strong communication on electronic and social media can help position an organisation in a better place to form relationships.

SMM 1: We build relationships by constant communication, mainly through our social media (WhatsApp), emails, and virtual meetings, but for our partners and donors, up-to-date websites are essential.

Insights

Analytics gives a view of engagement, and they help to identify audience - where is on your audience, who are they, how many interact and how similar organisations are doing. This section ought to understand where young people spend their time most.

Respondent 2: Facebook just because it doesn't use much data

Respondent 5: Facebook

Respondent 1: I spend more time on Facebook compared to Instagram and Twitter.

Respondent 4: Facebook and Instagram equally

According to the respondents, Facebook is a preferred social media platform because it is cost-effective.

4.1.3 Theme 3: Reach

Inclusivity

Taking note of your audience and the audience you are trying to reach is important when creating content. This section highlights the type of content published from both organisations on social media

Respondent 5: The information is informative but not to its maximum potential. I am a professional on the subject; hence I easily relate to any information posted.

Respondent 1: It is informative; however, I have to configure my news feed to receive only news I understand.

Respondents 5 and 1 highlight that information posted may only be understandable to the young people in the climate change sector.

Respondent 2: Yes, but only for people who are already involved, however for new people, it's not that catchy

Respondent 2 highlights textual frustrations that readers may face.

Integrity over creativity

Climate change is a sensitive subject matter, as it is borderline scientific; very little can be sugar-coated. It can be very tricky for faith-based organisations to please everyone. Social media managers in this section highlight the limitation to the range

SMM 1: To be inclusive, you must use relevant hashtags, tag the relevant people and pages that will engage and give traction to our posts, but on the other hand, precise can be watered down.

SMM 3: You want to be as honest as possible in telling a story. You also don't want to overhype something, but to be thought of as a serious situation, honour the truth. And so your strategy is to heighten awareness, but you also want to have a strategy where you bring about reality. So you want a text that shows you the problem. But you also want the text that shows resilience and capabilities of what you can do.

SMM 2: Well, I keep it simple, okay, make it readable.

Faith restrictions

Faith-based organisations have a high obligation to use social media with care and caution; online identity should include their priorities: worship, scripture, prayer, service and evangelism. The participants were asked if faith-based communications had limitations

SMM 2: Aligning climate advocacy to the Christian faith and others and making sure everyone is included is very challenging; you have to balance all of that.

SMM 1: The posts cannot be political at all. The posts cannot favour one religion over another as we are multi-faith organisations; I constantly have to check and double-check. Sometimes, you just want to share the message as it is, but you have to tone it down for the people; through that, you lose the spark.

SMM 3: I think being a part of a faith-based organisation is that when you share your ideas, you got to be careful because you shouldn't speak on behalf of the whole church;

you also need to understand that the church is viewed in that light as well, I mean, to be mindful of that.

The responses from the social media managers in the two organisations summarise the constraints of communicating on behalf of faith-based organisations and how it is viewed in public.

Respondent 4: Content creators need to ensure their social media presence for faith audiences is tone conscious; if not, a rift is highly possible.

Respondent 1: Some of the posts seem very censored and miss the opportunity to address the issue, but I guess it's the nature of the church communication.

Respondent 5: Honestly, there are too many rules in posting and sharing church content; climate change is a moving target. We need to move along already.

The response from the participants in this section escalates the issue of tone in faith-based communication. The respondents are aware of barriers and bottle necks within the organisations.

Jargon

Overuse of scientific terminology can cause a disconnect from a message; the audience may feel isolated and ultimately lead to miscommunication. Respondents were asked if they understood the message.

Respondent 4: Most of the time, the content becomes too technical

Respondent 5: The communication we receive is not up to full social media standards; it's very complicated, the English is too deep. I have noticed the power of effectiveness of social media through the simplest texts.

Respondent 6: Well, sometimes, for years, we have been hearing about climate change, but in order to tap on to the heart and faith, there needs to be an elimination of technical terminology, rather say 'creation care' instead of "environmental protection."

Respondent 2: Honestly, it can be better, with just simple English; for example, we had a meeting of bishops once, and really even they were confused about adaptation and mitigation. I think those two terms should be dropped. What is tree planting? Is it mitigation or adaptation? It doesn't matter. Let us just say 'grow indigenous trees'

Respondent 3: I am a professional in this sector, so my view is yes, but I have heard many times that ordinary people may not understand. The issue here is language. We need to let go of science and be dynamic, always.

The respondents in this section stress the concern of the use of language; it is apparent that specific terminology is one of the significant contributors to how faith-based organisations are not nailing social media communications.

4.1.4 Theme 4: Engagement

The need for social media

Social media managers were asked about their experience so far with curating content and managing the community.

SSM 1: It has been interesting because I get to engage on eco-justice issues discussed by other people, activists, and other environmental organisations. With time there has been momentum in ecological matters as more and more people are becoming aware and impacted by environmental degradation in their communities. They are sharing their experiences and raising their voices for environmental justice. I am really trying to make a change with what's available.

SMM 2: It has been enlightening; social media has so much potential; with full exposure, we can reach more people we don't know of. Even if it's not within the Anglican Church, we can find people from other church denominations saying, how do I become part of this? How do we share resources? and so on.

SMM 3: My experience of it is that it's a great tool to bring awareness, especially for people who are oblivious to what's happening; the need to invest more in it is very clear.

In this section, social media managers recognise the many possibilities social media can bring in environmental awareness if the organisations invest more in tools, identify key influencers and monitor social channels.

Catching on trends

To address social media short fall faced by both these organisations, the researcher sought to understand the expectations and needs of young people

Respondent 4: They need to use content from areas where local people are affected as opposed to using examples and images of places far away. They are both operate in Southern Africa, which needs to be a priority.

This respondent highlights the use of relevant information within the organisations' jurisdiction so that content is relatable.

Respondent 1: Generally, people get interested in visuals rather than text, so my suggestion for the NGO's is to make more visual content such as animations, illustrations or other motion graphic materials to make people understand the negative impact of their actions and what need to be done.

Respondent 2: make posts or articles that are age-appropriate. Try to involve/add the latest trends in environmental awareness content to get the attention of the people.

Respondent 5: Social media users are not much interested in information crafted in an academic format but information sent in graphical form (photos and graphic designs) and information following the current trend. NGOs should stay up to date on the current trend and hash Tag and use it or create their trend for the people to follow.

Respondents 1,2, and 5 highlights the idea of using graphics and visuals to attract the attention of young people and stand out from the usual technical climate change writing. With all the said by the respondents, the researcher asked the social media managers if they would recommend social media as a successful platform to communicate with stakeholders, especially young people in the climate justice sector.

Respondent 3: If they are serious about the digital world, they need to speed up this process and adapt to social media management quickly. We are firm believers of short and simple.

Respondent 6: Social media allows you to be relevant; it enables you to reach your target audience, any time of the day, wherever they are, and it's a very relevant form of communication. I don't see people reading blogs and newspapers; that should be a sign big enough for them to take social media seriously.

SMM 3: I need both organisations to be flexible, you know, post engaging content, be daring, create stories and content that will get us young people in conversation.

Conclusion

This chapter laid out the research findings and shared the participants' opinions on how social media is used by the two organisations in the study, as well as their strengths and weaknesses. The results showed that the participants were not satisfied with the social media.

5: Chapter 5: Discussion of research findings

Introduction

This chapter aims to analyse findings from the research. The analysis will be carried from the responses of the participants (respondents and social media managers). The chapter will also examine the themes according to the literature review from chapter two, assessing social media use for stakeholder communications in faith-based organisations.

This chapter will discuss and analyse the participants' views on the existing social media communication and the perception of the social media managers responsible for both organisations. Four themes emerged from chapter four which will address the aim and objectives of this study, contribution to the research, and social media scholarship.

Efficiency

It is stated in the literature review section 2.5 of this study that the introduction of social media impacted the ability of organisations to build solid relationships from social interaction. It also highlights that social media plays a significant role in instant communication, which is precisely what young people look out for, short and straight to the point immediate response. The preliminary questions sought to understand social media as means of communication between the organisation and participants. All participants agreed on the excellence of social media as a primary tool of communications because of its's efficiency and convenience.

Participants received social media well; this was almost an easy reply from all participants. When questioned, the participants simply say social media is part of their daily lives; they use it with practically no effort. As mentioned in previous chapters

according to the South African Social Media Landscape (2018) report, Facebook users in South Africa have increased by 14 per cent since 2016. (from 14 to 16 million). Fourteen million of them use their mobile devices to browse social media. (Nchabeleng, Botha and Bisschoff, 2018).

As of January 2021, South Africa had 38.13 million active internet users. The great majority (almost 36 million) used mobile internet as well. During the same period, it was determined that nearly 99 per cent of social media users accessed their accounts via their phones.

According to a blog by Lawlor (2018:1), allowing us to be in constant communication, social media has drastically transformed how we engage with one another. The days of having to wait to visit someone in person or for them to pick up their landline phone to leave a message are long gone.

The need for environmental NGOs to use social media to communicate with their stakeholders is centred around the convenience of keeping the flow of communication; it's just simple, it's either you are part of the digital era, or you are not. In this case, it is clear that social media is an easy and faster channel of communication with stakeholders, especially young people.

A social media manager mentioned that it creates spaces where the organisations can have discussions that would have required human interaction in the past, which cuts down so much attached to organising such happenings.

The internet provides a powerful, globally-connected platform that allows anyone to transmit information to millions of people in a couple of minutes at little or no expense. However, with all of that said, the authenticity of social media communication is always

in question. Participants agree that they are always on the lookout for false information as it turns out to spread faster.

While technology has given rise to ground-breaking developments like real-time citizen journalism, it has also enhanced both truthful and incorrect information exposure and effect. False information can be swiftly manufactured and circulated over the internet and social media platforms, with far-reaching real-world consequences.

One participant mentioned that false news spread fast and always results in bullying, which is honestly a digital pandemic. While there is an expectation or even more a demand for social media to nail down misinformation, there is very little likelihood that this would be stamped out. The effectiveness of social media as a communication tool is therefore hindered in the process.

Preference

Social media analytics give insight to social media managers and the organisation at large, indicating where their traffic comes from, the breakdown of interactions, and what your audience responds to the most. These are obtained by observing the conversation, how brand interactions, requests and needs and problems.

With just a simple preference question, participants were blatant about their choice. The young people from both organisations favour one platform more than the other; this is a case of organisations using social media intelligence to understand stakeholders' interests.

Social media analytics is a new and growing area that may help organisations design and apply measurement tools for gathering insights from social media interactions and evaluating the success of their own social media efforts. Analytics affords organisations to better deal with the issues mentioned above, target their audience preferred content,

and examine behavioural data such as how much time individuals spend on each platform (Ruhi, 2013: 213).

Reach

In this section, we will be discussing the type of content published and how the participants receive it. The literature review mentions that social media affords organisations almost an instant reaction to the public's feelings about their information, which helps writers structure content they know users will engage on. This type of communication framework, therefore, ensures a stable relationship between the organisation and the public. Participants were asked if they understood the content published; various responses came out of this question which the researcher divided into sub-themes:

Inclusivity

Participants clearly state that the content posted by these organisations is understood by people who have been working and are part of the environmental sector. One of the young people says, verbatim that he only understands the context because he is a professional in the field, but he also does not think an ordinary young person will get the message. There is sufficient evidence that both organisations need to diversify their communications which will speak to larger audiences, potential affiliates by looking beyond the usual religious and language notions, among many things.

Integrity over creativity

One of the key drivers of social media success is being creative with content, and that may require organisations to extend posts out of their comfort zone, research and ask questions. Essentially use the platform to your advantage and do things that would not regularly come across all surroundings. Young people may now communicate with individuals instantly through social media and share their lives through photographs, videos, and status updates, according to the literature.

These platforms are described by young people as essential tools for establishing and sustaining relationships, being inventive, and learning more about the world. However, according to both organisations' social media managers, the fear of losing the essence of their core message while trying to be creatives is a big concern. All social media managers in the study believe in keeping content simple and straight to what it is about; one even highlights that the frills to text waters it down.

Creativity is required in the mission to attract young people; the researcher is getting a sense of these organisations not wanting to break the norm and be different. Creativity is a key tool of social media and exposure to perspectives from the outside world.

It seems as if when an organisation establishes an online presence, it becomes more visible, which can be beneficial to promoting work. The more people attracted, the more effective communication is.

Faith restrictions

There is no arguing that faith-based communities all have the 'unspoken rule' everyone knows and respects it. This seems to have trickled down to faith-based organisations, especially on content with its name. The argument surrounds the idea that faith-based organisations do not have free will to post anyhow as they are faced with constraints of

remaining neutral and thoughtful of the entire faith community structure. Social media managers highlight the boundaries, portraying the organisation's core (climate advocacy) in the light that appeals to faith communities.

Young people hardly engage in anything conservative, restrictive and narrow. One of the social media managers references it as losing the 'spark'. The young participants need the spark, vigorous content that will challenge years of the climate crisis, and one participant mentions the rules on commenting and sharing their content, suggesting that the church needs to move on from such.

Jargon

Climate advocacy is a response method to global climate change, a very complex long term pattern shifts of temperature and weather conditions. The whole concept of climate change is born from science. The role of eco-justice organisations is to bring this big concept to the people, relate it to their everyday lives, how it is affecting them and what actions can be put in place to try and reverse the crisis. There is no running away from scientific terminology; however, it should be embedded in language understandable to many.

This section ought to understand the participants' perception of the language used, and it came to the researcher's knowledge that it is an issue. All participants agree that most posts are too technical to understand, especially if you are not familiar with climate resilience campaigns.

Most common terms in climate science are confusing to the general public, yet they mean simple commitments. One of the participants alluded that even some of the people you would expect will know don't, which may prevent people from forming part of response actions as they think what is expected is bigger and complex for regular individuals.

A word like 'mitigation' is a common expression often used as an act of response to climate change. The general public may not understand what is required of them, whereas it means efforts that reduce greenhouse gas emissions which can be as simple as planting a tree.

And even simpler terms like carbon; can be ambiguous as they are sometimes used as a stenotype for carbon dioxide. It's also used to refer to a group of greenhouse gases, leading to confusion when people are asked to reduce their carbon footprint instead of suggesting carpooling, recycling, choosing organic foods etc. Such terms do not reach the general public, especially young people.

This section suggests that faith organisations communicate about climate change more effectively when the intended audience is the broader public, especially youths. Young people appear to call for clear climate communication because they require credible, accessible information about how climate change affects their future.

Clear communication may translate to clear imagery—some of the participants referenced images and graphics as one of the most effective ways to communicate. Pictures and graphics have the ability to transmit complex information in a short amount of time while maintaining a high visual appeal. As a result, a large part of modern social media communication, particularly targeted to young people, effectively combines graphics with words by using familiar faces, phrases popular at the moment or graphics.

Figures 3 and 4 below show the use of a popular faith leader's image and nuclear towers, showing a cry against national disaster and climate resilience motivating message. There is more engagement with a familiar face than with a building structure.

Nuclear Free SA

View Insights Boost Post

Liked by francesca_deg and 10 others

safcei The current National Nuclear Regulator (NNR) performance plan lists the failure to sustain the Centre for Nuclear Safety and Security as one of the risks of running a nuclear programme in the long term. This is another reason why South Africa does not need any new nuclear. #nuclearfreeSA #nuclearfree

26 October

October 26 at 2:00 AM

11 likes, 0 comments, 0 shares, 0 saves

Overview ⓘ

Accounts Reached	51
Content Interactions	11
Profile Activity	1

Figure 3: SAFCEI NuclearFree campaign post

HOW ARE YOU GOING TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE?

View Insights Boost Post

Liked by superior.eggs and 5 others

safcei Blog: THEOLOGICAL RESOURCE BASE – Introduction: The world in crisis – why care of the planet is a religious & spiritual imperative. September 1 sees the start of the Season of Creation every year, and this year we explore what our diverse faiths tell us about looking after our common home, planet earth. Continue reading the blog here: <https://safcei.org/theological-resource-base-introduction/> #seasonofcreation

4 September

Reach ⓘ



Impressions 144

From Home	123
From Hashtags	16
From Profile	4
From Other	1

Content Interactions ⓘ 8

Figure 4: SAFCEI blog social media post with a famous faith leader

When analysing and comparing content and choice of image from the figures above surrounding campaigns that encase technical jargon and the responses from the participants regarding the use of language and imagery, it is evident that both affect how stakeholders receive your messages.

Young people immediately look for eye-catching and occasionally dramatic photography when scrolling on social media. The type of imagery chosen must raise awareness on all channels, accurately reflect the message, goal, and be attention catching.

The argument is that such content is somewhat too complicated to understand; the objective behind publishing technical content is not meeting the goal.

There is no shortage of studies indicating that the great majority of young people are drawn by the image first before the caption.

Engagement

Chapter two of the study mentions that religious non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play an important role in service delivery, community organisation, advocacy, and moderating information and resource flows worldwide. Engagement with stakeholders is a big part of this role, which is therefore becoming a concern should not proper processes be put in place.

In this section, participants were very clear that social media from both organisations has the potential to grow even further to address the needs mentioned above. Social media managers cite the need to invest in tools that will assist in tracking traffic, with one stating that they need to upskill content curators is evident.

The researcher established both organisations communicate with their stakeholders mainly on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter; however, there is very little to no response

when people comment. Minimal engagement may be a sign of not having a community manager, someone to track interactions or automated applications to give awareness of any communications.

Expectations

The findings suggest that participants under the age of 18-35 need both organisations to publish content that is more relatable to young people, making use of new-age tools to reach the participants, which essentially makes it easy to find the information. Participants want to see more information from areas that the organisations work in. One participant said the environmental crisis is different with each region, as it is essential to be mindful of the rest of the world. Still, the focus should be local, and content must be challenging and engaging.

Summary

The study investigated the role of social media for stakeholder communication in faith-based communication. The focus was interaction and engagement with predominantly young people between the ages of 18-35. These organisations are based in Cape Town, South Africa, and the participants were those affiliated with Green Anglicans and SAFCEI. The study aimed to bring forward the reasons why faith-based organisations do not apply all the functionalities of social media, how it affects the stakeholders, and what the stakeholders think of their current communication style.

The study also looked at styles of posts and how stakeholders interact with each. This analysis included writing style and imagery. The research revealed aspects where the organisations are lacking when using social media. Evidence shows that stakeholders do find themselves not engaging in content in some instances as it does not command interaction due to it being too complicated (scientific) or use of language (jargon). The study also reveals the minimum use of social media tools to target audiences, such as

hashtags. If participants miss content from their timeline, it will not show up in the discovery pages.

There is evidence that even though the content is informative and, to some extent, engaging, stakeholders also feel the need for more localised and relatable content from the organisations. Both organisations operate mainly in Southern Africa; therefore, they should prioritise climate issues from this region.

The study also reveals the need to upskill social media managers to have as so to have a much better handle of community management.

6: Chapter 6: Recommendations and Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

In responding to the study's aims and objectives, the researcher suggests further research to evaluate the progress of social media communications. This chapter is for the researcher to bring forward recommendations from data provided by the study and recommend how the organisations can improve their social media communications methods. This chapter will also present what came during the period of research.

6.2 Recommendations

After a careful analysis of the research and literature, it is the researcher's recommendation for SAFCEI and Green Anglicans to employ a strong social media plan through social media specialists. The specialist service can be from an agency or communications manager that is upskilled with tools to engage social media shortfalls. The specialist will also analyse the organisation's analytics to track down what works and what does not. This will be inclusive of the use of language; the social media specialist will rephrase content filled with jargon to come to the level of being understood by everyone. Additionally, they will curate more content that addresses climate resilience in Southern Africa to breed familiarity with the people they serve.

They have a base but need to be strengthened with a strategy, including social media plan, objectives, goals, target audience, and approach. All the above mentioned will assist in establishing how social media can be used successfully to engage with their stakeholders, determine the correct channels to focus on and their effectiveness.

In addition, both organisations need to be dedicated to community management, who will look out for engagements and regularly respond to participation to create a flow of interaction between them and the young people especially. The community manager will also pick up from non-response if communication is complex.

Both organisations must be clued up on the direction of social media as it updates with time. The recommendation is for them to conduct surveys with stakeholders to see which way they want to be communicated to, with more graphics, less text or the other round.

It is the researcher's last recommendation for the organisations to have a monitoring and evaluation system; they can use social media managing tools like Agora Pulse or Buffer to keep up with the analytics. Social media is high-speed; therefore, information is quickly disseminated and loses its peak almost as fast as it spreads. Content roll-out processes need to be evaluated regularly. Time-lapse affects efficiency - content around climate change is usually a moving target and requires an immediate response. Therefore, a clear guide on what to re-share as it happens is needed; this can be curated in a key messages document with automated answers to use while waiting for official press releases.

6.3 Further research

Further research around social media stakeholder communication can expand to communications hyper-focused on each faith. Curating content for multi-faith organisations can be challenging as it has to be inclusive of everyone's beliefs, resulting in threading between fragile lines. Separating the different faith's may be the answer to many issues as messaging will be robust and clear to a belief.

This research route would explore individual responsibilities, separating being tone neutral and addressing issues as they come, especially political ones. This is why it is to be noted that the nature of this research is qualitative and was performed on a small scale, and may not necessarily be relevant to some faith-based communities. The findings of this research may be used as an addition to existing research and an idea for future studies.

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7: APPENDIX A: Interview – Young people

Social Media as a communications tool in Environmental NGOs

Young people

1. What do you think of social media as a tool of communication?
2. Do you think that social media has affected communications positively or negatively?
3. Is social media your preferred platform to learn about information, or do you like other means, e.g. website or newsletters?
4. Between Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, which social media platform do you spend the most time on?
5. Is social media used up to your expectation by environmental NGOs?
6. Do you think social media is a helpful tool to communicate complex subjects like climate change to young people (between the ages of 18-35)?
7. Do you find the climate justice information posted on social media informative?
8. Do you feel like environmental organisations post content you understand?
9. Do you think the use of social media will attract more young people (18-35) to take up environmental justice?
10. Do you have any suggestions on how social media can be used better by environmental NGOs?

8: APPENDIX B: Interview – Social media managers

Social Media as communications tool in Environmental NGOs

Social Media Manager

1. What do you think of social media as a communications tool?
2. What constructs a stable relationship between your organisation and stakeholder?
3. How is your experience of using social media to raise eco-justice awareness?
4. What is your strategy when writing the text for social media?
5. posts as a faith-based organisation?
6. What issues have you picked up since you started using social media to communicate as a communication tool?
7. Has social media been successful in attracting young people to form part of the climate justice movement?
8. What is the response of young people to your social media posts?
9. Have you done any textual analysis to weigh what young people respond to the most?
10. Would you recommend social media as a successful platform to communicate with stakeholders, especially young people in the climate justice sector.

9: APPENDIX B: Letter of support from Green Anglican

GREEN ANGLICANS

Anglican Church of Southern Africa Environmental Network

Tel: 021 763 1300

www.greenanglicans.org



Dear Ncumisa

The Anglican Environmental Network (Green Anglicans) is pleased to support your research proposal titled Assessing the use of social media for stakeholder communication in the NGO environmental sector.

The goals and outcomes of this research will help the organisation have a different perspective on the use of social media and may help broaden our communications strategies.

We look forward to collaborating with you on this work.

Best of luck with your research

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rachel Mash', is placed over a large, faint, light-green background image of the Green Anglicans logo.

Rev Rachel Mash

Environmental Coordinator

Anglican Church of Southern Africa

10: APPENDIX B: Letter of support from SAFCEI



SOUTHERN AFRICAN FAITH COMMUNITIES' ENVIRONMENT INSTITUTE

The Green Building, Bell Crescent, Westlake Business Park, Westlake, Cape Town, South Africa
PO Box 106, Kalk Bay, 7990 info@safcei.org.za +27 21 701 8145

3 June 2021

Letter of support

To whom it may concern.

I hereby confirm that SAFCEI will be supporting the Public relations Masters research study by Ncumisa Ukeweva Magadla looking at **"Assessing the use of social media for stakeholder communication in the Faith-based NGO environmental sector."**

Kind regards
Tamzyn Pamplin
Communications Coordinator
SAFCEI

11: APPENDIX B: Ethics approval letter from CPUT



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Office of the Research Ethics Committee
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Secretary: Mziyanda Ndede

22 June 2021

Ncumisa Magadla
c/o Department of Public Relations Management
CPUT

Reference no: 210244208/2021/21

Project title: Assessing the use of social media for stakeholder communication in the NGO environmental sector.

Approval period: 22 June 2021 – 31 December 2022

This is to certify that the Faculty of Informatics and Design Research Ethics Committee of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology approved the methodology and ethics of Ncumisa Magadla (210244208) for the MTech Public Relations Management

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee for approval.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.



A/Prof I van Zyl
Chair: Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Informatics and Design
Cape Peninsula University of Technology

