A dissertation submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements of the Masters of Business Administration in Business Management to Dublin Business School and Liverpool John Moore’s University.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN IRISH CHARITIES: AN INVESTIGATION INTO APPLICATION, FUNDRAISING AND TRANSPARENCY

Submitted by: Pauric Buggy

Student Number: 1769157

Supervisor: Mr. Michael Kealy

Word Count: 21,931

MBA in Business Management

August 2014
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents ........................................................................................................................................... ii  
List of Figures ...................................................................................................................................................... v 
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................................................... vi  
Abstract ................................................................................................................................................................... vii  

Chapter 1 – Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 1  
1.1 - Background and Context ............................................................................................................................... 1  
1.2 - Aims and Objectives .......................................................................................................................................... 4  
1.3 - Research Approach and Limitations ............................................................................................................... 5  
1.4 - Rationale for the Research ............................................................................................................................ 6  
1.5 - Overview of the Dissertation ....................................................................................................................... 8  

Chapter 2 – Literature Review ............................................................................................................................. 9  
2.1 - Introduction ........................................................................................................................................................ 9  
2.2 - Can Social Media be Used to Develop Relationships with Stakeholders? ................................................. 9  
   2.2.1 - Are Charities Effective in Their Social Media Communication? ............................................................ 10  
   2.2.2 - How Should Charities Structure Social Media Communication Strategies? ........................................ 10  
   2.2.3 - Can Social Media Communication Provide a Tangible Benefit to Donors? ......................................... 11  
   2.2.4 - Are Irish Charities Improving Relationships Through Social Media? .............................................. 11  
2.3 - Can Charities Operate Similarly to For-Profit Businesses? ......................................................................... 12  
   2.3.1 - Is There a Social Media Gap Between For-Profit and Charity? ............................................................ 12  
   2.3.2 - Will Society Let Charities Act Like For-Profit Business? ....................................................................... 13  
   2.3.3 - Do Charities Improve with Increased Professionalism? ......................................................................... 13  
2.4 - What are the Barriers of Social Media Adoption in the Charity Sector? ....................................................... 14  
   2.4.1 - What are the Perceived Barriers Within Charities? .................................................................................. 14  
   2.4.2 - Are These Perceptions Really Barriers? .................................................................................................. 15  
2.5 - Can Social Media Become a Platform for Transparency? ............................................................................ 16  
   2.5.1 - Does Social Media Accentuate Scandals in Charities? ........................................................................... 16  
   2.5.2 - Can a Positive Reputation be Developed Through Social Media? .................................................... 16  
   2.5.3 - Is There a Relationship Between Transparency, Trust and Donations? ............................................ 17  
2.6 - Is it Possible for Charities to Monetise Social Media? ................................................................................... 18  
   2.6.1 - How has Charity Fundraising Developed? .............................................................................................. 18
5.2 - Research Question 1: How are Irish charities utilising social media and online technology? .................................................................................................................. 56
5.3 - Research Question 2: Are Irish charities successfully monetising the advances in social media and internet technology? .................................................................................................................. 57
5.4 - Research Question 3: How are social media and the internet affecting Irish charities in the areas of accountability and transparency? .................................................................................................. 58
5.5 – Recommendations for Future Research .................................................................................................................. 59

Bibliography .................................................................................................................. 62

Appendices .................................................................................................................. 71
Appendix 1 - Interview Questions ................................................................................. 71
Appendix 2 - Informed Consent Form ........................................................................... 73
Appendix 3 - Interview Synopsis A ................................................................................ 74
Appendix 4 - Interview Synopsis B ................................................................................ 81
Appendix 5 - Interview Synopsis C ................................................................................ 88
Appendix 6 - Interview Synopsis D ................................................................................ 97
Appendix 7 - Self Reflection on Learning ..................................................................... 107
Appendix 8 – Learning Styles Questionnaire ................................................................. 114
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 - Growth of Donations Online in the USA .................................................. 3
Figure 1.2 - World Giving Index 2013 ......................................................................... 7
Figure 2.1 - The Potential Value Social Media can Add to the Charity Sector .............. 26
Figure 3.1 - The Research Onion ................................................................................ 29
Figure 3.2 - Research Methodology Sequence ............................................................. 30
Figure 6.1 – Kolb’s Learning Cycle ........................................................................... 108
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am using this opportunity to express my gratitude to everyone who supported me throughout the course of this dissertation. I would especially like to thank Mr. Michael Kealy for his enthusiasm, understanding and availability during our meetings and beyond. I’m extremely grateful for your illuminating views and advice on all the issues associated this dissertation.

The interview process was essential in completing this assignment and I’d like to thank all the participants who facilitated this. I greatly appreciate the contribution they have made to my dissertation and am thankful for their time, patience and insight.

My friends and family have been a constant support and inspiration throughout the dissertation, and the MBA process a whole. The invaluable assistance and advice they provided will not be forgotten.

Finally, and most importantly, I’d like to thank Áine, whose unconditional support has not gone unnoticed. You’ll never know how much it means to me, but you have made this process so much more manageable.
ABSTRACT

Social media platforms have risen to prominence in recent years, arising from internet and technology developments, transforming the manner of daily interactions around the world. Businesses in every industry have tried to harness these benefits, with recent efforts in the charity sector achieving international prestige. Public confidence has been affected by high profile transgressions in Irish charities, while donations are also diminishing due to the financial difficulties the country has experienced in recent times. This research aims to clarify if Irish charities are effective in using social media and if it can be used to overturn these problems.

The initial research phase required an extensive and critical examination of the latest available literature on the topic. The author could then develop comprehensive theories on the use and capabilities of social media. Through a method of qualitative interviews, with candidates chosen to represent a cross-section of the sector, the author was able to apply the secondary research to the current situation in Ireland. Three charities and an external agency with expert industry experience were chosen to provide this in-depth primary data.

The findings illustrate the practical benefits of effective social media utilisation. It’s now an essential component of communication strategies as the Irish public are increasingly reliant on it to source information. With optimal strategies, charities can capitalise on social media presence. This cannot be monetised directly, but it produces value by increasing donations from other sources. Furthermore, by demonstrating outcomes and transparency, social media creates value by improving reputation and trust.

From an organisational perspective, this research provides important indications for Irish charities and guidelines to meet present day challenges. Continued research is required as this topic is constantly evolving, while smaller charities would benefit from an investigation of the situation organisations with less resources.
CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 - Background and Context

The charity sector in Ireland is diverse, ranging from large, national, multi-million euro charities to small community based operations, all with the common purpose of “changing [...] lives for the better” (The Wheel, 2012, p. 3). The term non-profit is also used as it is further encompassing, but both types of organisations have the same goals. The sector is growing with over 12,000 charities in Ireland, employing over 100,000 people and with turnovers totaling €1.3 billion. In the last few years an average of 100 additional organisations have been registered per annum (Irish Non-Profit Exchange, 2012, p. 4). The list of top charities, in terms of revenue, is dominated by hospitals, with the highest earner, St. Vincent’s Health Care, earning €363 million in 2011 (Boardmatch Ireland, 2012, p. 3). However, this represented a large fall from an income of €427 million in 2009. This trend is replicated across the sector, as income levels among the top 100 charities have dropped by 4.9% in the same time period (Boardmatch Ireland, 2012, p. 4).

The drop in income across the charity sector is replicated in the UK, a country with 180,000 registered charities (Quinton and Fennemore, 2013, p. 36). According to a joint report by the Charities Aid Foundation and National Council for Voluntary Organisations (2012, p. 4), three out of four people cite a drop in disposable incomes as the reason for the decline. Chikoto and Neely (2014, p. 572) outline that this is also the case in the USA with the significant parallel trend of an increased need for charitable services. These trends are also evident in Ireland but there are further factors that explain the suppressed revenue levels, namely an increasing need for transparency and accountability in non-profit organisations. Negative publicity around two Irish charities, the Central Remedial Clinic (CRC) and Rehab, following the disclosure of transgressions in the latter months of 2013 have made 91% of people less trusting of non-profit organisations according to Ó Cionnaith (2014). These trust issues have a direct effect on donation levels across the sector. This link between reputation and donations has been repeatedly evident in many studies across the world (Cordery and Baskerville, 2011, p. 199; Fussell Sisco and McCorkindale, 2013, p. 297).
The public would like charities to be conservative, so it is interesting to look at how a radical new technology such as social media can impact the sector. Social media can become a key tool in developing and destroying the trust required by charities (Gandia, 2011, p. 75; Gálvez Rodríguez, Caba Pérez and Godoy, 2012, p. 663). Originally founded with simple and personal capabilities in mind, social media is now used by a variety of organisations, corporations, government and non-profits alike to broadcast news, information and missions (Muralidharan et al., 2011, p. 175). According to Waddingham (2013, p. 187), Facebook and other social networks are not perceived as a way of making money by many charities, but as excellent community and relationship building tools.

Quinton and Fennemore (2013, p; 36) found that international charities have embraced social networks with 90% of them on Facebook, 60% on Twitter and approximately 45% on YouTube and LinkedIn. Attempting to build a relationship with consumers is the number one priority for charities using social networks (Lee and Ahn, 2013, p. 41; Sriramesh, Sanchez and Soriano, 2012, p. 123). They have radically boosted the instances of viral marketing and the electronic word of mouth generated is fast becoming an essential promotional tool (Hausmann, 2012, p. 174; Quinton and Fennemore, 2013, p. 38). As social media eats into the traditional communications paradigm (Mangold and Faulds, 2009, p. 360), it is important to investigate how aspects of this new phenomenon are being used and if it can benefit charitable organisations.

One aspect that will be heavily scrutinised by the author, is the capabilities of social media to improve fundraising. Online giving has taken place for some time, but it took a catastrophic event, the 2001 September 11th attacks in New York to bring fundraising via the internet into the mainstream. A survey that year among donors, indicated that only 1% donated using the internet. However, following the attacks, one third of the money raised in aid of the relief fund came from online sources, totaling $110 million (Chung-Shing et al., 2007, p. 40; Waters, 2007, p. 60), with the average online donation $10 higher than traditional, offline methods. Consequently, the financing of charities was changed forever and research from Bennett (2009, p. 116) shows that this is still evident today, as donors provide up to 20% more by credit card than they do by cheque. Figure 1.1 shows how online donations have increased steadily, year on year, since first gaining popularity in 2001, particularly since the middle of the last decade. It still only compromises 10% of total giving, but this ratio continues to rise.
The increased media coverage of humanitarian crises develops public awareness and a desire to donate online, as it is quick, efficient and trustworthy (Shier and Handy, 2012, p. 222). According to Lovejoy and Saxton (2012, p. 33), the advent of social media in recent years has allowed for greater communication possibilities for organisations and individuals. As charities review communication policies, priorities are moving from websites to social media (Waters and Feneley, 2013, pp. 216-217). Therefore, it’s important to understand if they can maximise the benefits this change.

Mano (2013, p. 288) stated that ability of supporters to be involved with a cause without leaving their physical space was the primary advantage of an internet presence to charities. The internet is therefore extremely useful in a variety of charity led activities from endorsing causes, organising activities and even online contributions. Social networks are perceived to have a strong social influence on followers and this can be used to augment the work of charities. People gathering around a cause online have the potential to create value for a charity and enhance positive associations (Quinton and Fennemore, 2013, p. 40).

According to research from The Wheel (2012, p. 14), 22.7% of Irish non-profit organisations perform some level of fundraising on the internet, while a further 30.8% desire to do so. Whether they are capable of doing so through social media is unclear. Waddingham (2013, pp. 187-188) suggests that there is serious potential for charities in the UK to grow fundraising efforts via the web and in particular on Facebook while Burt and Gibbons (2011, p. 183) and
Aldridge and Fowles (2013, p. 53) point to the major benefits of the social media, not only as a relationship and community building tool, but an avenue for financial gain.

The success of the No Make Up Selfie campaign in Ireland (Irish Cancer Society, 2014) has shown this to be a real possibility, but little is known about present operations or capabilities. Is this a new dimension in fundraising or a fad? Research by Montalvo and Baldwin (2014, pp. 2-5) also demonstrated the financial benefits of social media as part of a campaign in conjunction with corporate partners. Mercy Ships, a USA based charity, saw a return three times higher than investment and revenue increases of 12%, thanks to a social media strategy that maximised the publicity of a TV appearance. Further research shows evidence linking social media and increased donations (Mano, 2013, p. 292), but coverage of the issue is far from exhaustive and many authors suggest that charities don’t perceive it to be a lucrative financial avenue. The constant evolution of the platform is a challenge for charitable organisations and a generic approach will not work in all situations. Applying effective strategies is a priority, as charities must benefit from social media endeavours.

Finance and reputation are two areas Irish charities are struggling with in challenging times. However, as an array of online and social technology prospects are available to them, these challenging factors could also be a massive opportunity. It is intended by the author to determine how Irish charities are facing up to these issues and if they can nullify them and indeed flourish through the implementation of social media strategies. Present strategies will also be investigated, how charities use social media and how they intend to use it. To do this, the writer will conduct secondary research on the theory and opinion surrounding the impact of social media on the charity sector and conduct interviews with professionals involved in this aspect of the industry to ascertain if these theories can be applied to the present day situation in Ireland.

1.2 - Aims and Objectives

Social media has experienced a meteoric rise since it came to prominence and has completely changed the way in which people communicate and consume information. The changes have penetrated deeply and have dramatically changed everything from consumer interaction to the speed of word of mouth. Ireland is to the fore of this technology led transformation and the
statistics show that the growth remains strong (Ipsos MRBI, 2013). The result of this is the emerging presence of social media in all sectors, including among Irish charities who have taken to the platform even more than for-profit businesses (The Wheel, 2011). However, it is important to understand if Irish charities utilise this strong presence and what benefits, if any, does investment bring. With the technology changing all the time, in flux with the internal and external environment, have recent happenings brought new possibilities and challenges to the fore?

A primary aim of this research was to examine the potential of social media to finance Irish charities in addition to the overall benefits it can provide. Little or no research is available from an Irish perspective and many charities have no applicable strategy in this area, with only 22.7% raising essential finances online, through any method (The Wheel, 2012, p. 3). In an age where donations are declining and increasingly evaluated by consumers, charities should be following all possible avenues of funding. Whether social media is one that can be pursued successfully, is a question that can be answered following this research. In order to achieve this, a comprehensive review of available literature was followed by interviews with industry experts in Ireland. The major topics covered, as guided by the research questions, in this study were;

- To examine how Irish charities are using social media;
- To determine if Irish charities can successfully monetise social media advances;
- To evaluate if social media can aid Irish charities in the areas of reputation, accountability and transparency.

The author fully examined these topics through primary and secondary research, which is outlined in subsequent chapters, in order to answer these questions.

1.3 - Research Approach and Limitations

Both primary and secondary information were used to complete this research. Secondary research, with detailed analysis of the latest academic publications, papers, articles and industry centric reports, was used to provide the author with a thorough understanding of the present
situation. A high level of understanding was achieved through this, allowing the optimum conditions for primary research in the form of qualitative interviews with industry experts. Interviews were conducted to garner an understanding of the present day situation in Ireland around topics such as the monetisation of social media and its effect on reputation and transparency within organisations. The correlation of both sources of information allowed the author to reach an insightful conclusion.

However, the nature and design of the study predetermined that a number of limitations were in place. The vast level of practical work involved ensured that the time constraints associated with the part time nature of this research were extremely limiting. Nevertheless, the restraints allowed for the interviewing of four participants and this was carried out to the highest level achievable. Ideally, with additional time and resources the study would encompass significantly more interviews, and a probability sample allowing the research to be generalised and more easily applicable.

A further consideration was the availability of participants for interviews. In any sector, individuals are busy throughout the year, but increased scrutiny and calls for accountability in the charity sector may have been the reason why it was difficult to source some prospective interviewees. In any case, the researcher managed to organise a sufficient number of interviews, with high quality experts, and a balance view from across the industry.

The experience of the researcher in interviews was another limitation. According to Lee and Lings (2008, p. 220), interviewing is skill that gets better with practice. Inexperience in this form of research may lead to bias, objectivity, poor questioning and even the influencing of participants. The author endeavoured to refine technique as much as possible before performing any interviews and attempted to maintain subjectivity throughout the process.

1.4 - Rationale for the Research

The charity sector affects a substantial number of people in Ireland, not just those directly involved or in receipt of the immediate benefits. Between volunteers, staff, beneficiaries and donors, the list of potential stakeholders in the industry is enormous. The influence of the industry in Ireland has been demonstrated by the World Giving Index, whose inphographic
below (Figure 1.2) rates Ireland as the fifth most charitable country in the world in 2012, following extensive research (Charities Aid Foundation, 2014a). With the use of social media on the rise, not just individually, but also in charities and other businesses, it is important to examine how this technology is being used in such a significant sector.

**Figure 1.2: World Giving Index 2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Score (%)</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Score (%)</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Score (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States of America</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Charities Aid Foundation (2014a)

This research should provide a platform for further investigation, with limited research in the area at present and little or no examination of the situation in Ireland. In order to succeed, Irish charities should be using this platform in the most effective way possible. This research has determined what this is and if it is being achieved. In doing so, the research is of interest to all stakeholders in the charity sector but in particular, it offers an important contribution to professionals and volunteers in the area with practical information that can be used to gain advantages.

According to Riley et al. (2000, pp. 24-25) a dissertation subject should sustain interest over the period of time allowed, in order to have the best chance of successful completion and high achievement. It is also suggested that it may be beneficial for the researcher not to have too much knowledge in the subject area, as this may lead to frustration and boredom. The researcher currently works in the sports industry in a non-profit governing body. The parallels with the charity sector are clearly apparent. With aspects of that employment entailing social media development and a keen interest in digital media, the researcher chose a topic that they were interested in expanding their understanding of. The matter is not one the author had
exhaustive knowledge of, but it is certainly in an area they were interested in developing capacities.

The recipients of this research are Dublin Business School and Liverpool John Moores University with the supervisor, Mr. Michael Kealy, the primary recipient. The research is aimed towards professionals, academics and students interested in the charity sector and the growing field of research into social media. The dissertation will also be distributed to participants in the interview process, who have expressed an interest in examining the completed paper. The topic is contemporary, covering a relatively young aspect of an industry that has been established for thousands of years. Thus, the findings of this research should help individuals inside and outside the industry expand their knowledge, helping decision makers implement appropriate strategies.

1.5 - Overview of the Dissertation

This introductory chapter (Chapter 1) will give the reader an understanding of the research goals of the author and will provide a detailed overview of the topic. The following chapter (Chapter 2) is the literature review. It describes the existing dynamic between social media and the charity sector, based on the latest publications, reports and research pertaining to the topic. It provided the author with critical insight into the current theories and opinions surrounding the topic, allowing for the accrual of quality primary information concerning the situation in Ireland. The research methodology is the subject of the Chapter 3. This is included to demonstrate the methods that were followed by the author in order to answer the research questions and a justification for all elements of the methodology will be provided, as influenced by the Research Onion (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007, p. 102).

Following this, the next chapter (Chapter 4) presents the findings and analysis of the primary research. The researcher will present the results of the qualitative interviews with experts involved in the industry with a detailed discussion of the results in comparison to the literature review. The author will then present conclusions and recommendations based on the discussion in the concluding chapter (Chapter 5). References and Appendices follow with information such as sources, transcripts and a self-reflection on learning throughout the dissertation process.
CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 - Introduction

Following forays into internet communication by charitable organisations, social media technology followed in recent years, becoming increasingly popular, a connection that was matched by consumers. Iokamidis (2010, p. 281) outlined the true value of establishing a social media presence to an organisation. His study concluded that if applied optimally, it gives fans and supporters of a cause, a sense of belonging through this virtual home and another way in which they can interact, express opinions and identify with an organisation. Quinton and Fennemore (2013, p. 40) added that a social network around common interest or cause, can often become larger than the sum of its members. Growth could be through viral campaigns, good news stories or clever marketing and the research concludes that social networks can help generate positive associations, thus delivering real value to charities.

However, the overall effectiveness of social media technology in the sector has been challenged by many (Wang, 2010, pp. 79-82; Pope, Sterrett Isley and Assamo-Tutu, 2009, p. 126) and even more authors point to differences in how it should and can be used (Aldridge and Fowles, 2013, p. 53; Lee and Ahn, 2013, p. 41; Water and Feneley, 2013, pp. 216-217). The subsequent research aims to determine the effectiveness of social media use in charities, while highlighting recommendations for application.

2.2 – Can Social Media be Used to Develop Relationships with Stakeholders?

2.2.1 – Are Charities Effective in Their Social Media Communication?

As social media became an important facet of the internet and society, it could not be ignored by the charity sector. The internet had provided a space for communication that was often static but this development changed the landscape of interpersonal communication as well as organisational communication of information and ideas (Auger, 2013, p. 370). Using social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter to draw traffic to an organisations website, and to
increase awareness of their cause is just one of the ways in which charities have adopted the new technology (Wong and Jusoff, 2011, p. 71). However, similar to the early stages of the internet, Waters (2009, p. 1520) discovered that the adoption of social media by non-profit organisations once again lagged behind other industries as they waited to see how other charities used it. Charities were behind for-profit businesses because they were more consumer centric (Quinton and Fennemore, 2013, p. 38).

According to another study by Waters (2007, pp. 71-73), this one-way communication approach is not the ideal way to build relationships with stakeholders as an organisation cannot know if it is meeting stakeholder needs. In promoting two-way communication, he suggested that, “successful online adaptation will result in more informed donors and better relationships between donors and charitable organizations.” This opinion has been shared by more recently published research, including papers by Cho, Schweickart and Haase (2014, p. 565) and Waters and Jamal (2011, p. 333). They found that the one-way approach certainly helped organisations build trust with their followers, but it’s a lopsided relationship that has far more potential.

### 2.2.2 – How Should Charities Structure Social Media Communication Strategies?

Lovejoy and Saxton (2012, pp. 349-350) have a contrasting view on communication by charities via social media, developing the idea that one-way communication is as important as two-way communication in building relationships with stakeholders and maximising the effectiveness of social media. In analysing messages of the top 100 charities in the USA, they established that there were three categories of messages; information, community or action. The authors found information (one-way) messages to be most prominent with only 16% of messages “promotional and mobilizational in nature” and classified in the other categories. This finding is in contrast with the recommendations of other authors (Cho, Schweickart and Haase, 2014, p. 565; Waters and Jamal, 2011, p. 333), who suggest that charities should be aiming for this type of message as it can lead to positive results such as donations or the recruitment of volunteers.

However, Lovejoy and Saxton (2012, pp. 349-350) claim that the messages are hierarchical and should follow a ladder effect. One-way information messages build a base for the charity, which allows them to follow up with community and relationship building messages that enhance their network and provide feedback. Only with this scenario in place are charities are
in the best position to follow up with a call to action and possibly encourage donations. Charities not following this approach may be the reason that a similar study by Saxton and Waters (2014, p. 294) discovered that action messages, asking for a donation or promoting sales, were viewed the least favourable and prompted the least dialogue and engagement. This strategy seems to be optimal as it’s also recommend by many other researchers. They have found that it is beneficial to engage with an audience for some time, building awareness, before progressing to fundraising and effective social media efforts (Quinton and Fennemore, 2013, p. 46; Fussell Sisco and McCorkindale (2013, p. 297).

2.2.3 – Can Social Media Communication Provide a Tangible Benefit to Donors?

One-way communication can however be a limitation in evaluating the needs of consumers and donors. It had been shown to work well in marketing activities but fundraising campaigns have not prospered in line with internet technology developments. Charities lagged behind e-commerce organisations because they had a more customer centric approach with the possibility and need for interaction (Doherty and Ellis-Chadwick, 2009, p. 1248). With this orientation, organisations were able to measure consumer approaches, attitudes and reactions throughout the online retail process. Charities, with no immediate or tangible benefit to the consumer were failing to take advantage of these possibilities.

However, Quinton and Fennemore (2013, p. 38) suggest that the advent of social networking has now provided contributors and donors with a tangible, immediate benefit, that is present in the for-profit retail process in the form of goods received. “The contributor derives benefit in the form of self-satisfaction of having an indirect donation through their participation and also possibly having broadcast their willingness to help society to their online social network associates”. Through actively engaging with and supporting these contributors and other consumers, charities can build their social media presence and a connected community. Has social media become the key to providing the tangible benefit that donors increasingly seek?

2.2.4 – Are Irish Charities Improving Relationships Through Social Media?

These findings are linked to those of the Donoghue et al. (2007, p. 27), who found that charities have noticed that supporters require more and more information about the outcome of their donations, whether it be an individual donor or a partner corporation. Often, it’s a specific
project or cause that people desire to affiliate themselves too. The implications for charities are increased information and transparency. However, this delivers a noticeable sense of belonging and a greater perception of return on investment as a result of a donation.

This type communication has been shown to be the most effective way for nonprofit organisations to build and maintain relationships online (Cho, Schweickart and Haase, 2014, p. 567). Improving connectivity and engagement with a charity causes what Quinton and Fennemore (2013, p. 38) describe as “network weaving”, which enhances the possibility of financial benefits for the charity and the likelihood of greater success in fundraising campaigns. The author intends to discover if Irish charities are following this type of approach and reaping the associated benefits.

2.3 – Can Charities Operate Similarly to For-Profit Businesses?

2.3.1 – Is There a Social Media Gap Between For-Profit and Charity?

Initial skepticism and inadequate use stalled progress in the area of internet fundraising, as charities used the internet as a corporate communication tool rather than a democratic one (Kenix, 2008, p. 422; Waters et al., 2009, p. 105). Charities were unsure how this technology could help them achieve organisational objectives and were unwilling to put funds and resources into finding out how it could. Like in many cases, charity was following for-profit business and was failing to use appropriate structural models (Zorn, Grant and Henderson, 2013, p. 666). According to Goatman and Lewis (2007, p. 35) charities lagged behind for profit businesses in their adoption of internet technology in spite of the many opportunities it provides for the sector, “including an ease of access to a global donor community, the ability to bypass expensive intermediaries and an ability to update their message with relative ease” (Burt and Gibbons, 2011, p. 183). This research was supported by an Erich, Padman and Sweetster (2008, p. 413) study which found that nonprofit organisations were behind corporations and higher education organisation in social media adoption, and only ahead of government agencies and sole traders.

Conversely, more recent research by Barnes and Andonian (2011) in the USA has indicated that charities have now surpassed top businesses in social media adoption, suggesting that the
sector has now caught up with the trend. The study which compared among other sectors, Fortune 500 companies and the top 200 charities in the USA, found that charities were quicker to adopt social media over the three most popular platforms, Facebook, Twitter and blogging. This indicates that charities are now catching up with business in utilising online tools. This research will assess if the situation is replicated in Ireland.

2.3.2 – Will Society Let Charities Act Like For-Profit Business?

Liu and Ko (2012, p. 602) deduced that when it came to organisational development, charities were not at the same level as for-profit businesses because most charities copied what other, similar organisations were doing. As a result they were always reactive with all eight charities in the study behaving similarly throughout the learning and development process. This was very different to the behaviour of for-profit businesses studied. According to the research, this is explained by the added social obligation of charities to the public as well as standard business obligations. Perspectives in the sector need to be changed before radical changes are made. A more sophisticated operations procedure, similar to commercial retailers, is recommended to achieve greater success. These findings are shared by Zorn, Grant and Henderson (2013, p. 685) who found that charities tend to be reactive rather than proactive in their use of social media and eventual use was driven by increased stakeholder expectations and a desire to be more “business-like”.

The detrimental effects of this social obligation is a view shared by Pallotta (2009) who believes that society won’t allow charities to act like a business. His view is that a set of “irrational economic rules” govern the sector and discourage all the things that make a business successful like profit, risk, marketing and investment. He claims that charities acting like a business have become more about lowering overheads than raising revenue. Business has come to act like charity as they realise it provides a competitive advantage to link to a cause, but charity, for the most part, has not come to act like business.

2.3.3 – Do Charities Improve with Increased Professionalism?

In contrast to Pallota’s view, a study by Chad (2013, pp. 14-15) outlines how a charity can operate like a business and the effects of transforming market orientation. It outlines how a change of approach from a new leader revolutionised a loss making charity in Australia. In this
instance, a new professionalism driven approach led the unfortunate side effect of reduction in volunteer levels by 50%. Nevertheless, with staff levels remaining constant, but with an influx of staff from the for-profit sector, the charity managed to increase year on year revenue by 56% in just five years achieving the original goal of improving the organisations financial situation.

However, research by Pope, Sterrett Isley and Asamoa-Tutu (2009, p. 196) uncovered that some charities are wary of being linked with this level of professionalism, and limit marketing and social media budgets because of a perceived link with profit. Budgeting for marketing is viewed as problematic because there is an indication from donors, fundraisers and volunteers that they would like to distance charities from any perceived profit. The researcher aims to determine the standing of the sector in Ireland. Are charities comfortable with being linked to professionalism and have they implemented this type of approach? If society resists this, how can charities maximise revenue generation?

2.4 – What are the Barriers of Social Media Adoption in the Charity Sector?

2.4.1 – What are the Perceived Barriers Within Charities?

Research from Goatman and Lewis (2007, p. 43) highlights other barriers that prevent UK charities from fully embracing the potential of the internet and social media. Findings showed that smaller charities, generally with an annual revenue of less than £1 million, saw higher barriers to developing and maintaining a good presence on the web, including setup costs and staff. McCaughey et al. (2014, p. 2) also found these barriers when comparing small and big businesses. Smaller businesses are less likely to adopt social media and fewer observe benefits of utilisation. A study by Verheyden and Goeman (2013, p. 12) among Small and Medium Enterprises across the European Union found this to hold true in for-profit business also. Bigger companies are more likely to adopt and utilise social media, with these barriers having a less significant impact on them. Pope, Sterrett Isley and Asamoa-Tutu (2009, p. 189) point to other barriers for non-profit companies taking up online opportunities, namely deficiencies in staff, expertise, finance and technology.

Similar results appear in many studies focusing on the barriers to developing a social media presence, namely limited finance and a lack of expertise in the area (Zorn, Grant and
Henderson, 2013, p. 686), and a lack of understanding around the potential benefits of reaching such an audience (Carim and Warwick, 2013, p. 522). Another perceived barrier is the age range of donors, with research by the Charities Aid Foundation (2012, p. 7) in the UK finding that 52% of donations come from those over 60. In relation to social media, the prevalence of older users is far less (Braun, 2012, p. 673), with social media sites targeting those under 50 (Bell et al., 2013, p. 158), and therefore some charities feel that it is not a channel that reaches a lot of potential donors.

A study by Quinton and Fennemore (2013, p. 42) among UK charities revealed that the biggest barrier to adoption was the transparency and increased accountability that was associated with social media. Fearful and ill-informed, managers with a lack of experience in the field tended to approach social media with a negative mindset. This led to a timid and intermittent approach to usage as charities attempted to prevent information from entering the public domain.

2.4.2 - Are These Perceptions Really Barriers?

There is also a significant level of research that focuses on the drivers of developing a social media presence and it suggests that charities should work towards eliminating these barriers. In many cases, these drivers of social media adoption are similar to the perceived barriers emerging from other studies. Many researchers have found that the cost of fundraising online is significantly lower (Ang, 2011, p. 36; Nah and Saxton, 2013, p. 306) and the number one reason why charities should do so. Also contrary to the perceived barriers, the average age of donors is falling according to recent studies (Adloff, 2009, p. 1193) while the use of the internet and social media is on the rise among older adults (Hope, Schwaba and Piper, 2014, p. 3903; Bell et al., 2013, p. 158). Bekkers (2010, p. 378) suggests that the reason older people are more likely to give to charity is only because they are more likely to be solicited for donations. In addition, there is a significant level of research pointing to the positive effects of social media in relation to increased transparency (Auger, 2013, p. 370; Saxton, Neely and Guo, 2013, p. 141). These drivers will be examined in the subsequent sections of this chapter as the researcher attempts to understand the significance of these factors in Irish organisations.
2.5 – Can Social Media Become a Platform for Transparency?

2.5.1 – Does Social Media Accentuate Scandals in Charities?

Reduced costs and the potential for fundraising have not been the only consequence of the growth in the online presence of charities. This social and technological transformation has led to the call for greater transparency, security and accountability (Waters, 2009, p. 1521). Donoghue et al. (2007, p. 27) established that donors in Ireland are much more interested in how their donations are being utilised and this has more implications for charities. Supporters want to be more involved, yet require more transparency, feedback and communication. Ramifications of this social change are huge for charities. The increasing need for transparency and accountability in non-profit organisations has been recognised by charity directors in Ireland (Institute of Directors in Ireland, 2014, p. 3), with these factors proven to have a direct result on the general public and the level of donations. Recent transgressions in the Rehab and CRC charities, two of the top 30 earning charities in Ireland (Boardmatch Ireland, 2012, p. 3), have made 91% of people less trusting of non-profit organisations, according to an iReach survey as reported by Ó Cionnaith (2014). In addition, 22% of people have cancelled charity payments with 83% said they would think further before donating again.

A study by Cordery and Baskerville (2011, p. 199) pointed to the effect social media can have on transgressions such as those witnessed in the Irish charity sector in recent times. The speed at which information disseminates online led to a high level of public shaming suffered by the two charities examined in the study, following the release of concealed information. As a result, one of the charities involved was forced to close down while it was necessary for the other to undergo a very expensive image reform. Negative associations were also found by McCaughey et al. (2014, p. 4), with charities wary of developing social media because it opened a new platform for complaints, criticism and bad publicity.

2.5.2 – Can a Positive Reputation be Developed Through Social Media?

The risks and benefits in organisational use of social media in relation to transparency, are often ‘two sides of the same coin’ (Picazo-Vela, Gutiérrez-Martínez and Luna-Reyes, 2012, p. 509). It’s apparent that positive information can have the opposite effect. According to Connolly and Hyndman (2013, p. 961), meeting stakeholder expectations of accountability
“has the potential to increase the confidence of stakeholders, legitimize the operations of charities and provide a basis for the stability and growth in the flow of funding”. Organisations are now treating a good reputation as a competitive advantage. Optimising the social responsibility of an organisation can be the key to getting the most out of volunteers and donors. 

Auger (2013, p. 370), Schloderer, Starstedt and Ringle (2014, p. 120) and Gálvez Rodriguez, Caba Pérez and Godoy (2012, p. 663) take a similar view on the impact of the increased availability of information and social communication. Each paper suggests that the internet can be a tool to both improve and detract from a charities reputation. By using the internet to disseminate information that is “timely, responsive, persuasive and transparent”, organisations can compete with the huge quantities of data and opinion on the web. In this way they can develop transparency and a positive reputation as a competitive advantage as opposed to a perceived threat.

2.5.3 – Is There a Relationship Between Transparency, Trust and Donations?

Research of Spanish charities by Gandia (2011, p. 75) agreed, finding that “the decision to adopt an informative strategy that increases informative transparency on the Internet favors the obtention of donations in the future” while also helping maintain the demand for the work of the relevant charity. In addition, it was found by Saxton, Neely and Guo (2013, p. 141) that organisations “that make better use of online disclosure tools will […] fare far better in the market for charitable contributions”. Aside from the benefits, Quinton and Fennemore (2013, p. 47) suggest that openness and transparency will become mandatory for charities and social networks may be central to demonstrating this. All the evidence points to the need for transparency. With this in mind, it is paramount to determine if social networks can be the vehicle for transparency in a challenging time for Irish charities.

A study by O’Neil (2008, pp. 270-271) outlines further reasons why social media can play an essential role in developing trust, satisfaction and commitment between stakeholders and charities. The study found that communications from charities that helped doors and the public understand how finances are being utilised was the most significant predictor of these three variables. Long term attitudes and the overall level of donor support towards an organisation are significantly affected by the level and quality of their communications.
The way in which society consumes information has completely changed as a result of social media and is in fact driving its growth (DiStaso, McCorkindale and Wright, 2011, p. 236). Consequently, communication via this platform is becoming more and more important in developing this commitment, satisfaction and trust. The findings of O’Neil are similar to those of Fussell Sisco and McCorkindale (2013, p. 297), who found that Facebook and Twitter affect public perception of an organisations credibility and transparency. To optimise these variables, the authors suggest that charities need to update their content regularly but also remain consistent in their message. In addition, it is essential that they not only post information, they must also engage in two-way dialogue to get the most from social media.

2.6 – Is it Possible for Charities to Monetise Social Media?

2.6.1 – How has Charity Fundraising Developed?

Until recently, charities have used time and labour intensive methods of fundraising for years such as cold calling, local fundraisers, direct mail and soliciting donations from the public (Shier and Handy, 2012, p. 226). As the need for charity and greater levels of financing has grown with time, charities have constantly sought new ways to raise funds and entice donations (Saunders, 2013, p. 141). Similarly, Bennett and Savani (2011, p. 133), found that charities are always on the lookout for fresh fundraising ideas due to the intensity of the competition they face for donors. Interestingly, half of the charities surveyed get the majority of their ideas from other charities, showing the slow nature of the industry as companies benchmark themselves against the work of others.

While original methods are still part of many strategies, exponentially more time is being devoted to internet based approaches that can reach a global audience, often beyond their geographical remit. The diversification into the world of the internet became essential as people spent more time surfing the web (Hausmann, 2012, p. 173). The rate of technological advancements was accelerating and a web presence became essential for many charities. The immediate popularity of the internet had a huge impact on nonprofit organisations as they sought to utilise these new technologies, particularly as part of marketing strategies (Quinton and Fennemore, 2013, p. 37). Initially utilised in the form of websites and email, the non-profit sector primarily saw the internet as an information and awareness tool (Witt, Rowland and
Wilkinson, 2012, p. 209; Goatman and Lewis, 2007, p. 33). However, there is much recent research to suggest that not only can an online presence attract donations (Castillo, Petrie and Wardell, 2014, p. 35; Waddingham, 2013, p. 187), it can also grow them.

2.6.2 – Are Charities Overlooking Social Media as a Revenue Source?

An offshoot of developing internet technology, social media is now used by a variety of organisations, corporations, government and non-profits alike to spread news, information and missions (Muralidharan et al., 2011, p. 175). According to Waddingham (2013, p. 187), Facebook and other social networks are not perceived by many non-profits as a way of making money, but as excellent community and relationship building tools. Attempting to build a relationship with consumers is the number one priority for charities using social networks (Lee and Ahn, 2013, p. 41; Sriramesh, Sanchez and Soriano, 2012, p. 123) because of the difficulties raising money from these platforms. As a result, advertisement campaigns are prioritising further engagement through Facebook, Twitter and other networks.

However, there is much research to suggest that social media should not be utilised solely as an information/relationship building tool and that it has real efficacy in fundraising efforts. Aldridge and Fowles (2013, p. 53) point to UK research which suggests that employees working exclusively on online fundraising contribute £170,000 per year. Not alone does this research point to the lowering of overheads and the cost saving benefits, it also suggests that value can be created by developing online technologies.

A 2013 study by Mano (2013, p. 290-292), examining the effect of social networks on giving behaviour and online contributions, is in agreement with the findings of Aldridge and Fowles. Mano found that by extending the range and variety of internet communication, charities could enhance the level of civic engagement achieved and online donations correlated to this activity. Research found that not only did social networks generate online contributions, they also had a positive impact on offline giving. However, the study did differentiate between different types of social media. It is suggested that social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter, increase online donations while blogging has more significance in promoting offline giving. This displays the importance of information provision in helping achieve the fundraising goals of nonprofit organisations, which was also suggested by Lovejoy and Saxton (2012, p. 350).
2.6.3 – Can the Social Media Peer Model Increase Donations?

In contrast to the research highlighting the limited capabilities of social media as a fundraising tool, many authors suggest that not only can charities monetise social media advances, they must do so in order to survive. This is an opinion shared by Saunders (2013, p. 145), who states that charities have to start thinking like for-profit organisations in order to compete. Waddingham (2013, pp. 187-188) is a further author revealing how social media can provide monetary as well as relationship results for charities. He shows the links between Just Giving, the UK’s largest charity aggregation website, and Facebook. In 2011 alone, Facebook drove over 1 million donors to the site, contributing over £22 million. They have discovered the benefit of sharing an individual donation with friends/followers and have redeveloped their site to facilitate this as much as possible. The research shows that an individual share on Facebook generates between £1 and £18 extra for charity. This research is backed up by Bekkers (2010, p. 379) who found that people are more likely to give to charity when the social distance between themselves and the request is smaller. Therefore sharing a donation and perhaps soliciting a request via Facebook or Twitter should lead to enhanced donations.

While agreeing that peer to peer solicitation does indeed lead to an increase in donations, a study by Castillo, Petrie and Wardell (2014, p. 35) does not find the benefits to be as positive. In addition they find that they idea of sharing their donation with friends via social media can be off putting to donors. They found that donors were more likely to direct this information to friends when an incentive is offered, even if it was just an additional $1 for the relevant charity. The research also finds that this peer to peer solicitation model works best when it is diffused generally and non-targeted to friends already logged on to Facebook. With contrasting evidence on its effectiveness, the experience of Irish charities on the efficacy of peer to peer fundraising using social media, will provide great insight to this research.

2.6.4 – Are Charities Attempting to Monetise Social Media?

Despite several examples of how social media can be used by charities to augment fundraising efforts, much research suggests that charities are still finding this difficult. A study by Waters, and Feneley (2013, pp. 216-217) on the top 100 non-profit organisations in the USA found that the majority have yet to truly embrace social media and prefer to develop their relationships with the public using their own website. The study also suggests that charities may be better
off trying to reach out to individuals where they are online, i.e., Facebook, Twitter and other social media, rather than trying to attract them to their own website. Lovejoy, Waters and Saxton (2012, p. 314) made similar findings, discovering that although use of Twitter among top charities in the USA is prevalent, most of the interaction is solely one-way communication.

With evidence suggesting that charities find it difficult to develop social media into a direct fundraising tool, this research will determine if this is the case in Ireland. If they are not doing so, it is important to establish the reasons for this. There is research to suggest it can be done with charities possibly overlooking opportunities and this hypothesis will be comprehensively tested.

2.7 – Can the Effectiveness of Social Media be Measured?

2.7.1 – What are Charities Measuring at Present?

The biggest advantage in using social media services over websites, according to Saxton and Waters (2014, pp. 281-283), is the extra measurement capabilities they allow. While web analytics do allow a certain level of measurement, they cannot measure engagement in the way that social media can. The various platforms popularly used by charities provide data that can be used to quantify the level of engagement with an information post, an affiliated cause or even a viral charity campaign. These channels have become increasingly suited to businesses and organisations as they have evolved, allowing them to measure public reaction. As technology continues to develop, charities can track the sources of donations, with these monitoring capabilities essential to developing future campaigns and marketing strategies (Quinton and Fennemore, 2013, p. 43). However, the same research suggests that a limited number of charities are capable of doing this at present and McCaughey et al. (2014, p. 3) have suggested that the “inherent difficulty in determining return-on-investment garnered through organizational outlay on social media”, is a significant barrier to social media adoption.
2.7.2 – What are the Difficulties in Measuring Social Media Ventures?

Despite the rapid growth of social media as a communications platform, it is still a relatively new phenomenon. As a result, measurement is still a topic that puzzles professionals according to DiStaso, McCorkindale and Wright (2011, p. 237). Participants in their study had concerns over how to measure the real impact of efforts and indications of how it influences behaviour, with some even questioning if social media was something that could be measured. However, other studies such as that by Parveen, Jaafar and Ainin (2014, p. 9) identify social media impact factors. Measuring variables before and since the adoption of social media, managers in large Malaysian organisations listed cost reduction, increased brand visibility, competitive advantage, improved customer relations and information accessibility among these factors. While improvement may not be solely down to social media, the evidence suggests that it plays a crucial role.

Arora, Arora and Palvia (2014, p. 341-343) agree that social media, along with other digital tools present difficulties for business in calculating return on investment. As a result they have attempted to develop an index, based on technological, social, economic and ethical dimensions, in order to quantify social media success. However, the model is largely untested and must be adapted for alternative industries. The research shows that that social media success is difficult to measure but measurement is something that is increasingly demanded.

2.7.3 – Is it Possible to Measure the Results of a Social Media Campaign?

The power of social media, and the measurement of its capabilities has been shown this year through the No Make Up Selfie campaign that flooded Irish social media accounts in March, raising over €1 million for the Irish Cancer Society (Irish Cancer Society, 2014). The success of the campaign was replicated in the UK, raising £8 million for Cancer Research UK (Charities Aid Foundation, 2014b, p. 21). In Ireland, the message spread virally across social media sites, encouraging people to donate €4 via SMS or online, growing organically, separate of the Irish Cancer Society. The power of social media meant that Irish people, and many non-Irish were able to contribute to the campaign from all over the world via the Irish Cancer Societies’ website.
Only in the last few weeks has the Ice Bucket Challenge become a phenomenon on social media, particularly in the USA (Reddy, 2014). A viral campaign, similar to No Make Up Selfie, individuals, challenged by friends are asked to donate to Motor Neuron Disease charities and/or video themselves pouring a bucket of ice water over themselves, before nominating another friend and posting to social media. The campaign has garnered great support from the general public with the involvement of numerous celebrities enhancing its profile. It has helped the Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis Association in the USA raise $7.6 million in the first two weeks of August, an increase of over 500% on 2013, in addition to augmented coverage and awareness of the cause. The craze gone global, thanks to the power of social media, with charities in Ireland now starting to reap the benefits (Kelly, 2014).

In contrast, Giving Tuesday is an example of an organised social media campaign that has been very successful in promoting charitable giving. Through Twitter and Facebook, a partnership of charities across the USA benefit each year from a simple social media campaign. On the first Tuesday of December, users are encouraged to mark messages with #GivingTuesday, raising awareness and encouraging donations. The increasing potential of social media fundraising is displayed by the year on year growth of the campaign, with the $10 million raised in 2012, an increase of 53% on the previous year (Nonprofit Business Advisor, 2013, p. 1). Giving Tuesday donations boosted in 2013, by 90%, a sign that social media is playing increasing role in financing the sector (Giving Tuesday, 2014).

In a conservative industry, fundraising professionals will lean towards traditionally successful methods which can be measured. The success of these campaigns is easily measured because they are linked to a specific causes and dates. Nevertheless, the measurement tools used are neither completely accurate nor easily transferrable across the industry. Aside from these campaigns, there is a dearth of examples in the area. Measuring the overall benefit is essential for charities aiming to maximise the potential of social technology. The author has identified the importance of establishing the capabilities Irish charities have at present.
2.8 – What is the Future of Social Media in the Charity Sector?

2.8.1 – Is Social Media a Fad or a Necessity?

While it is still difficult to measure the impact of social media, it is generally accepted that current social media developments are irreversible and will have a huge impact on the future of communication (Hausmann, 2012, p. 180). As a result, they are indispensable and organisations should look into optimising further developments. Contrasting findings were conveyed by McCarthy et al. (2014, p. 193) in a study of UK football clubs. They found that many failed to invest time and money into social media infrastructure because they believed it might be a fad. As sport, politics tourism and charity have been suggested to be similar industries from public relations point of view (Curtis et al., 2009, p. 92), this research can also apply to the charity sector. The researchers also suggested that the longevity of current platforms could well be limited.

While disagreeing in the overall future of social media, the research does concur with Haussmann in finding that “to continue doing very little, or nothing at all, was no longer an option”. This is due to conclusions, also shared by Fisher and Smith (2011, p. 328), that interactive and online two-way communication will continue to take place between consumers, whether the organisation is involved or not. Therefore, it is important to develop this presence and elicit some form of control. This compares favorably with research from Quinton and Fennemore (2013, p. 43), which found that most charities initial forays into social media were due to necessity. They felt compelled to do so in order to harness its potential, but also to create a presence counteracting any unofficial representation. All charities will need a heightened social media presence as the technology develops.

2.8.2 – Can Social Media Create Value in the Charity Sector?

According to research by Wang (2010, pp. 79-82), it is highly beneficial for companies to follow recent IT trends, such as social media, if seeking to build and maintain reputation. A company associating itself with an IT fashion by a further 1% will gain an increase in reputation of 0.52%. However, the research also suggests that the early adoption of an IT trend and subsequent investment, does not necessarily result in value creation and it may just become a transitional trend. A contrasting opinion is held by He (2014, p. 5), in research surrounding the
use of social media by SME’s. Not only does the research suggest that social media is not a fad, it also claims that it can add value to a business. However, the study concludes that putting up and having a Facebook page is of little benefit to business. Firms must participate and communicate effectively with customers in order to build their brand. It may take a few years but a persistent engagement online will eventually reap rewards.

Similarly to He, Curtis et al. (2009, p. 92) suggested that it may be a while before public relations practitioners in charity organisations harness the full capabilities of social media technology. They predicted that adoption would only become more popular as the most effective methods of use are determined. In development, charities will once again revert to imitating the success of others, as they tend to do in using new technologies (Liu and Ko, 2012, p. 602). Waters and Jamal (2011, p. 322) agreed, finding that charities, along with many other types of organisations have been found to fall short in terms of capitalising on the interactive nature of the internet.

A McKinsey report by Chui et al. (2012, pp. 132-133) suggests that there is untapped value in social media for all types of businesses. However, the authors do foresee a future where the potential benefits will be realised across all sectors. As talent, research and innovation improve, so too will the value of social media and social technology. This will have major implications for businesses, including those in the charity sector. The study deduces that value can be added in the industry across five categories as a result of social technology related activities; advertising, IT software, e-commerce, donations and value-added services. The study estimates that value of up to $730 billion could realised by the sector across these categories if use of social technology is optimised. Of course, these estimates are maximum values and across the entire industry, but it is interesting to note all the areas that social media could potentially impact in the figure below (Figure 2.1).
2.8.3 – Is Mobile the Next Major Development in Social Media?

In embracing social media, charities moved with the times and will continue to be a necessity. One of the major changes currently taking place is the accession to mobile platforms of social media communication. Waddingham (2013, p. 190) believes that it is essential for organisations to understand consumers experience on mobile devices, adapting all platforms to ensure relevancy and ease of use. An example of the prevalence of mobile technology is the fact that over 80% of Facebook users access their accounts via mobile each month (Smith, 2014). The necessity to prepare for these changes is a view shared by Aldridge and Fowles (2013, p. 58), who also note that mobile payments are growing dramatically, with the global payments site PayPal, processing $4 billion in 2011 and $7 billion in 2012 via mobile devices. It is estimated that the value of mobile payments in the UK alone is expected to reach £2.5 billion by 2016. It is essential therefore that the charity sector accommodates these applications to ensure maximum levels of finance. Research by Unified Social Inc. (2014) show that the mobile age has already arrived on social networks. Highlights of the research include the fact that YouTube views in the USA are now 40% on mobile devices and mobile Twitter users are
79% more likely to use the application multiple times a day. In addition, mobile users are almost twice as likely to share posts on social networks as traditional desktop users. This research has implications for social media strategies in nonprofit organisations and it is important for the author to uncover if Irish charities are prepared for this.
CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

3.1 – Introduction

This chapter will outline and explain the necessary methodology used in order to fulfil this research. The research questions are stated first. These were fundamental in determining the approach taken within the methodology. In order to answer these questions the correct methodology had to be followed. The realist philosophy adopted by the author was selected in order to answer these questions and the reasons for this are discussed. This resulted in the choice of a qualitative mono method and this will be extensively justified in this chapter. The appropriate data collection and analysis methods will be described as they are the next step in the process before ethical considerations and research limitations are acknowledged.

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007, p. 3-4), the term methodology refers to the theory surrounding how research should be undertaken, whereas methods are the techniques and tools used to facilitate the observation and analysis of data. They establish that it is important to distinguish between these two pillars of research as it helps the researcher understand that the methodology has huge implications for the method(s) used.

A research methodology can be considered to encompass a body of methods (Collis and Hussey, 2009, p. 67). The methodology is the system employed by the researcher to answer the research questions; a set of steps used in order to achieve this and the logic of choosing these steps. The subsequent sections of this chapter will explain the rationale for the system and steps employed by the author using the ‘Research Onion’, pictured below (Figure 3.1). The image, as devised by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007, p. 102), compares the research process to that of the peeling of an onion. The process is layered and each layer requires different considerations but with logic behind the decision at each step. Each layer contains an important aspect that contributes the overall research methodology.
The aim of the research was to gather a depth of information about the relevance of social media and the internet to Irish charities, its importance in organisational strategy, its ability to deliver finance to the organisation and the ramifications of utilisation. A number of approaches were considered, including a positivist, deductive, quantitative mono method through surveys. However, on reflection it was decided that that did not best meet the purpose of the study and that Irish charities would learn best from an in depth analysis of the operations of prominent Irish charities. In order to achieve this, the research performed was cross sectional, mono method (semi-structured standardised interviews) using realism and interpretivism philosophies with an inductive approach and qualitative data. The sequence of this research methodology can be seen below in Figure 3.2. Sections in this chapter will explain the reasons for these choices and the methods and techniques adopted by the author.
3.2 - Research Questions

The aim of the research was to gather a depth of information about the relevance of social media and the internet to Irish charities. As a result of the literature review, the following research questions were established as crucial to the dissertation:

How are Irish charities utilising social media and online technology?

Still a relatively new phenomenon, it is important to ascertain how Irish charities are using the social and internet tools available to them and if their usage corresponds with the studies analysed in the literature review. It is important for decision makers in these organisations that investment in social media is being channeled appropriately. This question will help answer this and provide an approximation of best practice for the use of these resources.
Are Irish charities successfully monetising the advances in social media and internet technology?

Monetising social media presence is something that has proven difficult. However, as online presence grows and investment in technology increases, charities will look to make a return on it. All of this is happening at a time when donations are threatened. This question’s aims are twofold. Firstly it aims to establish if social media capabilities can be monetised and secondly it will determine how Irish charities are managing to do this. The results will provide guidelines to Irish charities on utilising existing platforms to further their existing strategies.

How are social media and the internet affecting Irish charities in the areas of accountability and transparency?

Research has shown that reputation, accountability and transparency are three of the pressing issues in the charity sector. Social media has been shown to be both a positive and negative factor for charities in relation to these factors in that it accentuates both sides of the argument. This question aims to outline the situation in Irish charities and suggest recommendations on how an online presence can be best managed in relation to this.

3.3 - Research Philosophy

The research philosophy is the outer layer of the Research Onion and as such it plays a crucial role in determining the overall research methodology. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007, p. 101) the research philosophy determines both the development and the nature of the research and underpins the collection, interpretation and analysis of the data. The philosophy chosen will determine the research strategy and the methods used to complete this. It “contains important assumptions about the way in which you view the world” but “the philosophy you adopt will be influenced by practical considerations” (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2007, p. 101).

No research philosophy is described as better or worse than any other, they are simply different alternatives that can be used to attain research goals. Three main research philosophies are
described by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007, pp. 103-107) as the make-up of the outer layer of the onion. Positivism, realism and interpretivism are the three alternatives with each carrying different viewpoints and assumptions and requiring different reactions from the researcher.

For the purpose of this research a critical realism philosophy was assumed by the author. According to Wynn and Williams (2012, p. 798), critical realism;

> assumes that the theories generated by the conduct of scientific research must revolve around the independent reality that compromises the world, even though humans are usually unable to understand or observe this reality, and that our knowledge of this reality is fallible (Wynn and Williams, 2012, p. 789).

This philosophy recognises how the business world is constantly moving and evolving and we may only understand it for a fleeting moment. Critical realism does not generate results that can be generalised and universally applied following research (Parlour and McCormack, 2012, p. 310). Instead it is recognised that the philosophy establishes dynamic conclusions that are an expression of the relationship between mechanisms and context and how these relationships shape the way life is experienced. The author was of the opinion that this was the best way to research the impact of social media on Irish charities. The organisations, their environment and the social technology are constantly changing so this research could only apply to a moment in time and critical realism was the best way to capture this.

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007, p. 104), “the essence of realism is that what the senses show us as a reality is the truth; that objects have an existence independent of the human mind”. Critical realism maintains can marginally further our understanding past that which we can see. However, Lee and Lings (2008, p. 56) sustain that it is “extremely difficult to distil a single methodological approach” in philosophies so there was elements interpretivism in this research based on the apparent variety of interpretations that were the case in the large and diverse non-profit sector, especially when undertaking a small cross sectional study.
3.4 - Research Approach

There are two main alternative approaches when carrying out research, inductive or deductive. For this layer of the “Research Onion” the inductive approach will be utilised as it fits better with the research philosophies and research questions and has a more flexible structure. The definite and rigid structure of a deductive approach would not have delivered enough depth or quality in results. This type of approach is based on existing theories which provide guidance for the research.

“Deductive theory represents the commonest view of the nature of the relationship between theory and research” (Bryman and Bell, 2003, pp. 9-10). Researchers choosing this method have a pre-existing hypothesis which is then subject to research and concerted scrutiny. The methodology for this type of research must be skilfully chosen and the researcher must prepare mechanisms for collecting data that can correlate with the chosen hypothesis. This is a ‘top-down’ approach as evidence is used to support rather than build a theory (Ritchie et al, 2014, p. 6). However, the almost linear approach of deductive research can place restrictions on the quantity and quality of emerging data.

On the other hand, the inductive approach allows for the gathering of greater level of information. In relation to the inductive approach, Fisher (2004, p. 76) outlines weaknesses, stating that;

the assumption is made that because things have always been so that is how they will be in the future. The strength of inductive arguments is often weaker than that of deductions. However, the more supporting evidence there is, the stronger the probability that the inference is true. Deductions carry certainties but inductive conclusions are probabilities (Fisher, 2004, p. 76).

Induction is a ‘bottom-up’ approach and relies on the ability of the researcher to create patterns and categories from large quantities of data (Creswell, 2007, pp. 38-39). This process allows researchers to work between themes and gives them a chance to interact with participants in order to shape the data that emerges from the process. Despite its limitations and the lack of certainties, the inductive approach best served this research methodology. It allowed for the collection of vast quantities of qualitative data and flexibility throughout the entire process.
This flexibility was essential in carrying out exploratory research as there was not enough existing literature to form a strong hypothesis. It was therefore a key element of a research approach that necessitated the production of a large amount of applicable, in-depth primary information.

3.5 - Research Strategy

Of all the options in the Research Onion, the case study strategy is best positioned to carry out the research in this study. Ritchie et al. (2014, p. 66) state that case study strategies are an “exploration of multiple perspectives which are rooted in a specific context”. The integration of the different perspectives of multiple individuals on the same topic can lead to the development on an in-depth understanding of a topic.

In this instance, a multiple case study approach was chosen as it allowed an evaluation of the impact of social media across three different organisations through face to face interviews. Multiple cases and different perspectives make the case for generalisation much stronger according to Creswell (2009, p. 74). It will allow for comparison of findings in each organisation along with the views of the expert company providing relevant essential services to the industry. Collis and Hussey (209, p. 83) note that disadvantages of this strategy include possible limited access to perform research and a huge investment of time and difficulty framing the scope of the study. However, they also note that there are many advantages such as the in depth nature of the acquired information and the potential for the research to be both original and very stimulating.

All of the options available including case study, experiment, action research, survey, ethnography, grounded theory and archival research were considered as strategies. Grounded theory, described by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007, p. 499) as an analysis process that was “developed to build an explanation or to generate a theory around a core or central theme that emerges from your data”, was also considered as a strategy. It would have been useful in this instance as there is little existing theory and it’s constantly evolving. It allows for an objective analysis and requires an open mind to inhale a vast amount of data. However, Creswell (2007, pp. 127-128) notes that at least 20 to 30 interview must be completed to develop a strong theory. He also notes that 4 or 5 is the maximum he would recommend for a
case study. Therefore a case study strategy was adopted as it is suitably applicable and is achievable in the time restraints of the research.

3.6 - Research Choice

After weighing up all considerations, a qualitative mono method was chosen for this research. The qualitative choice was made because it would generate a large about of data which would have a high degree of validity and which could be understood within the context of the research (Collis and Hussey, 2009, p. 143). However, this method requires a wealth of background information to contextualise the data produced. Multi method and mixed method approaches were deliberated in order to increase the reliability of the research and may have been feasible had time constraints not been such an issue. Quantitative research alone would not have produced the depth of information required.

In order to answer the research questions, the experience and opinions of the personnel interviewed were essential. Three fundraising managers in Irish charities were interviewed. If this position did not exist in the employee covering this field was interviewed instead. This position was chosen as the researcher was particularly interested in the impact of social media on fundraising and how the medium can add value to an organisation. The charities chosen all have a website and at least one active social media account. In addition, an expert creative agency, with extensive experience supplying the industry, was interviewed. Three members of staff with responsibility for social media, client services and planning, who work in partnership with a variety of Irish charities, were interviewed simultaneously. Their varying collective experiences offered much greater internal and external insights into the charity sector than interviewing an individual would.

Interviews were chosen as the qualitative research method because they “provide an opportunity for detailed investigation of the personal context within which the research phenomena are located, and for very detailed subject coverage” (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p. 36). The interviews were in-depth in nature in order to produce qualitative data and this was recorded on multiple devices for transcription. A copy of the interview questions used is included in this paper (Appendix 1). These questions were semi structured as this allowed the researcher the flexibility to shape the content to some degree through probing and re-formatting.
of the interview (Ritchie et al., 2014, p. 184). This is essential due to the wide variance in all the organisations interviewed. This type of interview is “focused in terms of topics covered and yet flexible in that it is possible and often desirable to steer questions into areas that appear promising from the point of view of providing rich data and/or additional insights” (Lancaster, 2005, p. 134). The qualitative nature in how primary data is collected allowed for exhaustive investigation of the topic but secondary data was also essential to drafting conclusions. Research papers, reports and articles were essential were company reports and information, which could be garnered from the relevant organisations website.

3.7 - Time Horizon

Cross-sectional studies “collect data on all the variables in the study at a single point in time” and “observe variation in the relevant variables by studying multiple cases” (Lee and Lings, 2008, p. 56). As the time allowed to complete the research is restricted, the study was cross sectional in nature. Therefore the research could not analyse the use of social media and internet over time (longitudinal) or even compare use at two different time periods (time lag).

Cross-sectional studies are a method for assessing ‘macro-level change with the focus of the research on the situation rather than the participating individual (Ritchie and Lewis, pp. 54-55). Therefore, this time horizon was easily applicable as the research questions required a snapshot of the current circumstances. Longitudinal or time lag studies tend to look for trends over a period of time, with repeated procurement of information, rather than the immediate insights of a cross-sectional study. If time restrictions were not present, a longitudinal study on how technology has impacted Irish charities and their fundraising efforts may have been appropriate and interesting. However, inside the confines of a twelve week window, the author was considering the present day situation and was justified in selecting the cross-sectional approach.

3.8 - Sampling

Due to the in-depth and intensive nature of the study and taking into account the time restriction, a non-probability sample was used. It is not possible to sample the entire population
of fundraising managers in Irish charities over the course of this research. It is also unfeasible to even obtain this list. Therefore, the non-probability technique allows for “selecting a sample when you do not have a complete list of the population. Because you do not have a complete list of the population, you cannot select your sample from this population at random” (Saunders and Lewis, 2012, p. 137). The resultant findings cannot be generalised because the sampling is non-probable.

Purposive sampling, a technique under the non-probability heading, was used in the course of this study to research the significance of the internet and social media in the fundraising efforts of Irish charities. Convenience sampling was considered but authors such as Saunders and Lewis (2012, p. 140) criticise this as it involves “using […] those who are easiest to get hold of for your sample”. Purposive sampling involves the selection of the sample based on a criteria and characteristics that will enable a detailed understanding and exploration of the principle research questions (Ritchie et al., 2014, pp. 113-114). In this case the sample was chosen to represent the experiences and attitudes of a diverse sector; from small to large, from national to global. This is known as heterogeneous sampling and facilitates the identification of central themes among a variety of cases.

With access often an issue in qualitative research (Collis and Hussey, 2009, p. 83), the author solicited possible interviews through some contacts in the sector. With a shortlist in place, the charities approached were of varying size and makeup. A fourth charity was only available beyond the timeframe of the assignment. By the time this became apparent, the logistics of effectuating an additional interview were unmanageable. However, as mentioned previously, four interviews was wholly sufficient to perform case study analysis. Fundraising managers, or persons in equivalent positions, were procured for interviews from a large Irish charity with cumulative revenues of over €20 million, a small Irish charity with revenue of approximately €2 million and the Irish branch of a global charity with revenue in Ireland of over €2 million. These parameters were set in order to provide relevance and importance to the resultant data, right across the sector. The insights from the expert creative agency will add to this thanks to their extensive campaign and social media work with organisations throughout the Irish charity landscape.
3.9 - Data Collection and Analysis

While time consuming and with the possibility of bias on the part of the interviewer, interviews have many advantages including the flexibility allowed, the opportunity for clarity and probing and most importantly the richness of the primary data obtained (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010, p. 212). The in depth information produced gave vital insights into the ramifications of using social media in the charity sector. However, secondary data is just as important in answering the research questions. Secondary data is a valuable commodity that puts perspective on newly collected data and elements that are not fully analysed can be the subject of new research (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p. 60). It was completed by the author prior to the primary data collection phase and laid the foundations for the interview process. The author engaged with the research already available on social media in the charity sector, paying particular attention to the latest reports, articles and academic papers on the topic. Trends combining both elements were examined as well as the latest research on social media and charity, independent of each other.

The rationale for using interviews as the collection method is consistent with Riley et al. (2000, p. 129), who sustain that the interview is the technique to use if meeting two conditions;

First, that the researcher is seeking at the level of meaning, feeling and value, insight into how individuals or groups think about their world and how they construct the reality of that world. Second, if the researcher is uncertain as to how the target population actually thinks about the topic under examination – if it is not known how they conceptualize the area, how sure they are of it, or how much they actually want know about it, then the interview serves the purpose of explanatory insights (Riley et al., 2000, p. 129).

There are many key features of interviews that helped the researcher collect premium primary data and answer the research questions according to Ritchie et al. (2014, pp. 183-184). Firstly, the combination of structure and flexibility that comes with a semi structured interview allows the interviewer to shape the content produced to some extent so that the topics covered are of importance to the research. The interactive nature of the process allows the interviewer to adapt to the conditions, knowing when to probe and how to frame questions in order to obtain information. The interviewer is able to explore the answer initially given, probing in order to
get a deeper meaning and an understanding more relevant to the research goals. Questions were open ended where possible to facilitate this process, with participants asked to elaborate or clarify if the interviewer felt that it would improve the content and deliver the maximum information (Collis and Hussey, 2009, p. 145).

 Alvesson (2011, p. 28-29) points to several issues with the process concerning both the interviewer and the interviewee. How the interviewer handles the situation of the interview is vital in its potential success. The design and planning of the interview are crucial components that are a skill that can be developed. How questions are framed and how the interview is designed and controlled are skills that take time to perfect. Alvesson (2011, p. 32-33) goes on to describe how the situation of the interview itself can be quite complicated, particularly the onus on two strangers to form an immediate connection in order to produce an insightful and understandable set of data. In attempting to conduct proceedings against time constraints, it can be difficult to achieve these goals. To minimise the negative effects of these issues, the author practiced the interview technique in the weeks prior to data collection. They also used this time to establish and maintain contact with the interviewee in order to build a bond sufficient to optimise the interview situation. In addition, an interview script and guide was developed and followed in order to ensure best practice was observed during interviews.

The interviews were transcribed and the audio records expunged following the interview process. Coding was then used in order to analyse the content of the data, a method of systematically converting qualitative data into numerical data (Collis and Hussey, 2009, p. 164). This allowed the researcher to find recurring words or phrases from the transcripts with the purpose of grouping similar themes and topics together. By doing so the data could be “gathered, reduced, rearranged and integrated to form a theory” (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010, p. 372). Descriptive coding was performed first, from a summary of the raw data. After the initial indexing and sorting the process continues and the researcher developed categories for the data in order to grasp its essential meaning and use it to answer the research questions (Ritchie et al., 2014, p. 278). As a result, the most important issues emerged as results and could be used alongside secondary data in order to produce conclusions.
3.10 - Ethics

Generally, ethics means the ‘standards of behaviour that guide the moral choices we make which govern our behaviour and our relationships with others’. Since virtually all research using primary data involves our relationships with others, this is clearly something we shouldn’t ignore (Saunders and Lewis, 2012, pp. 74-75).

In order to protect the integrity and policies of the individuals and organisations involved in the research process, their desire for confidentiality was respected at all times. In advance of the interview process, participants and their employers were informed in writing about the research, its aims and the information required through the interview process. All details were forthcoming and the interviewee was permitted to withdraw from the study at any stage to ensure that participation is voluntary. In addition, anonymity was offered to both the individual and the organisation involved to ensure that no information that is perceived confidential is disclosed. Participants signed an informed consent form (Appendix 2) prior to the commencement of the interview to ensure they fully understand the protocols in place.

Interviews were recorded using capable devices and transcribed at a later date. All information was stored securely and confidentiality was ensured. Once utilised, recordings were expunged. At any stage in the process, participants had the right to refuse to answer a question which they felt was inappropriate or they couldn’t answer as it was confidential or against company policy. This right to withdraw remained until the data was published. A two-way dialogue was maintained before and after the interview to ensure standards were high and reassurances were provided. The information gathered was used exclusively for dissertation purposes, respecting the rights and policies of the cooperating sources.

3.11 - Limitations

Due to the nature and design of the study, a number of limitations are in place. Ideally, with additional time and resources the study would encompass significantly more interviews, and a probability sample allowing the research to be generalised and more easily applicable. As a part-time student, combining work, other commitments and research, time restrictions were a major issue. In addition, the necessary tasks required in order to complete this type of research;
sourcing participants, correspondence, preparation, etc., are very consuming and took up a considerable portion of the twelve week research window allowed before submission. Therefore, it was only possible to complete a maximum of five interviews in fulfilling this research. One of these planned interviews cancelled at a stage when it was too late to arrange another suitable participant.

The suitability of the participants in the study is also a major consideration and possible limitation. The sampling method chosen was non-probability, purposive sampling. It is not possible to list the entire population relevant to the research. Even if it was, tight scheduling windows may hinder the availability of suitable participants meaning that a probability sample could not be attained. A further consideration affecting the availability of participants is the increased scrutiny and calls for accountability in the charity sector (Institute of Directors in Ireland, 2014, p. 3). With a desire to prevent possible harmful disclosures in some organisations, it may be more difficult to source interviewees. This was not an issue in this instance but it may have been if the time allowance was greater and a random probability sample was desired.

The consequences of this increased public scrutiny might also have led to a tendency in selected interviewees to be closed and protect information. In order to avoid this, anonymity was offered to all participants along with a complete outline of the ethical protocols. Participants were entitled to refuse to answer questions and could withdraw the interview from consideration at any stage before publication. All of this was explained in writing beforehand and participants also signed a consent form (Appendix 2). However, despite the assurances in place, it is likely that participants were still a little wary and closed, and possibly did not reveal information which they deemed to be sensitive.

A final limitation was be the experience of the researcher in interviews. According to Lee and Lings (2008, p. 220), interviewing is skill, a technique that gets better with practice. Inexperience in this form of research may lead to bias, objectivity, poor questioning and even influencing from participants. The author tried to refine the technique as much as possible before performing any interviews and attempted to maintain as subjective approach as possible throughout the process. However, no matter how objective they try to remain, the likelihood is that bias manifested itself at some stage of the process, whether it is during the interview
process of in analysis of the results. Preconceived opinions are hard to fully dismiss no matter how concerted the effort is achieve this.
CHAPTER 4 – DATA FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 - Introduction

This chapter gives a comprehensive breakdown of the primary data collected, in order to understand how the research questions can be answered in relation to Ireland. Having already analysed the relevant secondary information through the literature review, the author was in a position to highlight the important aspects of primary data necessary to answer these questions. Qualitative, semi-structured interviews with open ended questions were undertaken with suitable candidates to extract as much in depth information as possible on the topic. Interviews were based on the same set of standardised questions, which can be found in Appendix 1. A coding process was used to comprehend the vast amount of primary data emerging from the interviews. This allowed the researcher to gradually whittle the information down to the most important issues which became the categories for analysis.

In order to obtain the optimum level of data from the interviews, both company and individual anonymity was offered to participants. Because of extensive experience in the sector, all participants were in an excellent position to answer the interview questions. Accessed through some contacts in the industry, the three participating charities were chosen from options, in order to best embody the industry, with variances in many elements including size, resources and budgets. Three employees of an external agency, which acts as both an advisor and a supplier to many organisations within the charity sector, were also interviewed. With vast industry experience in the area of social media and fundraising campaigns, the insight they could provide complemented the information from charity executives. While the researcher acknowledges that this sample can’t represent the industry as a whole, they are of the opinion that the variety provided by these four interviews provides a better snapshot of the industry, and more accurate answers to the research questions than a small random sample could.

The supervisor was informed of the data collection strategy and proposed interviews ahead of the process commencing. Following approval, the researcher travelled to perform the interviews at a venue suitable to the participants. Interviews, which lasted approximately an hour each, were recorded onto capable devices before being transcribed. These were made
available to the supervisor in both formats along with a signed consent form from each interviewee, a copy of which is included in Appendix 2. A synopsis of the transcription for each interview is also included in the Appendices (Appendices 3 to 6).

The interviews were structured in such a way that they correlated to the secondary research and also so that they could answer the research questions. This section will detail the major findings of this process in relation to the original research questions. Each research question has been awarded its own subheading in the subsequent subchapters and the primary data accumulated will be analysed therein.

4.2 - Research Question 1: How are Irish charities utilising social media and online technology?

In order to promote their needs and further their strategy all but one of the participating charities agreed that a combination of three social media message types; information, relationship building and calls to action, was the best strategy to adopt. Charity A explained that social media has become a shop front for the organisation to the public. Here, they can display all the necessary information in a place where consumers are present. The charity also tries to engage with people, putting up the kind of messages they want to see, finding that this helps build a level of trust with their followers. The final category of message, the call to action, can then be utilised around the particular times it is necessary. The message to ‘Register’ or to ‘Donate’ goes out via social media when these actions are required. These actions don’t take place through Facebook, Twitter, or any other social media platform, but these are the drivers to this action.

Likewise, Charity C also follow the hierarchical message approach as alluded to in an earlier chapter (Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012, pp. 349-350). Information and relationship building messages are most important for them and a priority, based on positive feedback. While admitting that Facebook is not a successful medium for producing donations, the action messages that they put out through Facebook do lead to increased donation. They find the platform, and Twitter to a lesser extent, are excellent for recruiting people to fundraise for a particular cause or event. These action messages eventually lead to revenues for the organisation and further engagement and interaction. With a foundation in place, like Charity
A, they are in a better position to request action, as suggested by Fussell Sisco and McCorkindale (2013, p. 297).

A recent phenomenon they have found with Facebook is that it can have a multiple effect, because it allows followers to extend the message by tagging a friend. In this case, the call to action is now coming from a peer on behalf of the charity via social media. This correlates with Quinton and Fennemore’s (2013, p. 39) finding that the sharing mechanisms of social networks are ideal for harnessing the benefits of word-of-mouth electronically. This word of mouth has become an indispensable tool for recruiting fundraisers. The messages from friends are somewhat viral and put a slight social pressure on people, as identified by the expert agency. This is a great way of combining a personal ask with an organisational ask, which is often far more engaging.

An alternate approach has been sustained by Charity B. Messages beyond those with information are very limited, although they do recognise the purposes of the different message types. Interestingly, they were also the only charity interviewed that prioritises Twitter over Facebook. Relationship building and calls to action are not a major part of their social media strategy and they are uncertain of their benefits and of how to implement them. The charity don’t invest time or patience in social media because they cannot see how it translates to cash. Consequently, they maintain a lopsided relationship with followers, as detailed earlier (Cho, Schweickart and Haase, 2014, p. 565; Waters and Jamal, 2011, p. 333) and it’s possible that future calls to action won’t be supported as a result. This alternate understanding is also opposed by the expert agency. They agree with the varied message approach that the other charities use, finding that social media is great for information and advocacy. In terms of engagement, this allows them reach a wider audience, and more appropriately, as they learn from the experiences that followers and supporters are having. Linking these steps to action and fundraising has proven difficult, but it’s something that could be successful if refined more. Through experience, they have found that charities consistently put out messages without the call to action. Stitching these messages together better, even having the invitation to donate, will really help.

A recurring theme emerging from primary data analysis was that the content of the message broadcast is as important as the category it falls under. The expert agency have found through experience that many charities approach social media messages the wrong way. The medium
is supposed to be fun and light-hearted. Charities need to account for social behaviour when communicating via social media. Even though the No Make Up Selfie campaign was not started internally, this is why it went viral and was such a success for various cancer charities. The campaign was fun, familiar and self-perpetuating. People found something they wanted to share and get behind. This is the key to successful campaigns according to the expert agency.

As recognised previously (Verheyden and Goeman, 2013, p. 12), skills are a challenge in using social media, with Charity A the only participant not to emphasise this. In their case, the charity is the Irish branch of an International charity with a much bigger, more experienced support team capable of much greater outcomes. The other charities are working on a much smaller scale, as are the majority of Irish charities according to the expert agency. Many organisations lack the ability and confidence to engage appropriately with the public and this is a challenge of the medium itself. In such a conservative industry, a radical platform such as social media can be badly utilised. Focusing on limitations and sad, harrowing, guilt inducing stories does not work on social media. The messages that work and are shared tend to be fun and engaging. Charity A agreed, finding that comedic posts on Facebook create more interaction than a traumatic survivor story. Charity C have found that “people give to people, not facts and figures”. When messages have the right content, they build awareness and trust, which makes people more open to donate at a given opportunity.

The relative infancy of social media can affect how it is used by Irish charities. All the respondents noted that the charity sector is inherently conservative in nature. Charity C noted that this affects them in fields in which they have relatively little experience, such as social media. The funds required to run a successful campaign are hard to secure as the financial success of previous efforts are hard to measure. They reasoned that the need to meet targets and forecasted returns was so strong, charities will always return to proven methods. In tandem with the opinion of Pallotta (2009), Charity A noted that charities generally don’t want to be seen taking risks with people’s money and investment in digital platforms is stunted as a result. Uncertainty over the future of social media was alluded to by all respondents and seems to contribute to the unwillingness to take risks with it. Charity C agreed, while also specifying the previous success of Bebo and its virtual disappearance within a few years. The expert agency agreed with this sentiment, finding in their experience that there is already movement away from established social media platforms by younger people. However, consistent with earlier learnings (McCarthy et al., 2014, p. 193), all charities agreed that social media has a strong
future, just potentially not in the long term on current prominent platforms like Facebook and Twitter.

While recognising the continued importance of television, radio and print elements, the interviewees, with the exception of Charity B, perceive that online elements such as web advertising and social media are becoming just as important, as suggested in an earlier chapter (Mangold and Faulds, 2009, p. 360). Charity C have now identified social media as an integral part of their communications mix. Consumer behaviour has driven an increased demand for social media and this is expected to grow as the technology develops just as witnessed by Hausmann (2012, p. 173). They have identified the movement towards mobile technology and will invest there. Wherever people are gathering information and interacting, they need to be there. Consequently, if they do have the success of a campaign going viral, the resources and skills will be there to harness this. As well as this widespread effect, social media has allowed closer individual communication, according to the expert agency and Charity C, providing an opportunity to give verified support services and personalised communication to followers. Charity B does accept that social media is part of the overall promotional mix and it is a part of their overall strategy. Nevertheless, it is not a large element as they believe that traditional media will overshadow it. The expert agency foresee social media playing an important role in future strategies but it must be knitted in with and supported by traditional channels as these might be the avenue for any resultant actions.

A drawback of social media, according to Charity B, is that it’s primarily used by young people and messages are targeted at them. Traditionally, most charities looked to people in their fifties and older, primarily women, according to all the participants interviewed. However, Charity A find that age is actually a driver for them to use social media, because they are targeting young people primarily and so are “fishing where the fish are”. Charity C agreed in effect, stating that one of the primary reasons for their online and social media presence is consumer behaviour. In their experience, this is how consumers wish to support and communicate with the charity and as a result, it has become essential for them to facilitate this demand. The expert agency agreed with this, stating that it’s a much closer channel for charities to interact than traditional media and brings even more benefits to this interaction as a result. These charities are taking the opportunity to engage with a younger audience and diversify their donor pool soliciting donations from a younger audience, which, as mentioned in an earlier chapter (Bekkers, 2010, p. 378), is a huge potential growth area. Additionally, when building social media capabilities,
these charities are reaching out to and strengthening the existing donor base, as a consequence of the growth in the popularity of social media among older people.

An aspect of social media Charity B do find beneficial is the access it provides them to corporate partners. They have found that it can be successful in engaging them and initiating associations that can benefit both parties. The nature of communication through Twitter allows for this, as also shown by Montalvo and Baldwin (2014, pp. 2-5). Charity B alluded to recent partnerships Lidl has forged with charitable organisations such as Barrettstown. The partnership has allowed charities to spread their message to a wider audience through penetration of a corporate social media following. The expert agency mentioned a similar arrangement Oxfam had with 2FM recently, bringing benefits to both parties. This partnership allowed Oxfam to extend their reach to a bigger, wider audience, increasing awareness, engagement and followers, while 2FM enhanced their reputation through philanthropic association.

4.3 - Research Question 2: Are Irish charities successfully monetising the advances in social media and internet technology?

One of the major themes to emerge from the interview process was that it is difficult to make money directly from social media, with all three charities admitting that they have failed to do so to date, consistent with several findings mentioned in Chapter 2 (Lee and Ahn, 2013, p. 41; Sriramesh, Sanchez and Soriano, 2012, p. 123). Charity A expressed that there was no way to donate directly through Facebook or Twitter, by far the most popular mediums in their social media portfolio. They have found these elements to be great for building awareness and trust, but they don’t do a lot more than that, particularly by way of facilitating donations. Charity B conveyed a similar view, finding social media futile aside from awareness. They don’t invest time or patience because they don’t believe it translates into money. Similarly, Charity C don’t perceive it to be a successful medium for raising funds aside from a viral phenomenon like the No Make Up Selfie Campaign, a view that was shared by the expert agency. However, they further elaborated, pointing out that while that campaign was spread on social media, and this was the key to its success, the donations were provided by text, a completely different medium.
Nevertheless, aside from Charity B, respondents were adamant that they do get a return from social media investment, hence its prominence in their organisations. Charities A and C use it to drive people to donate online because it allows you to put your cause and a donation link beside each other, in a place that is heavily populated by potential donors. The expert agency agreed, adding that it is impossible to know how people will donate when they see a message because there are increasingly more ways to do so. These associated revenues from social media are consistent with the findings of Aldridge and Fowles (2013, p. 53), as established in an earlier chapter. According to the expert agency, before campaigns like No Make Up Selfie, it was hard to find something that could translate social media presence into cash for charities. Its success was built on the simplicity, immediacy and ease of use. Text donation is simple and it ties in easily with social media, as both can be completed at the same time. They have found that other charities have tried to launch viral campaigns where the donation element has multiple steps, involves credit cards and is cumbersome. These don’t work because they are overly complicated and not familiar, reducing the likelihood to share and the propensity to go viral. In addition, they have found users don’t like leaving Facebook once on there; the seamless nature of the No Make Up Selfie campaign another reason why it was such a success. Charity C also alluded to this, noting that the transformation in transaction tools around the industry has required charities to change their operations. The public now want to support through text donation, social media platforms and online. Consequently, charities must equip themselves to harness any potential viral campaign, just as the Irish Cancer Society and Cancer Research UK did.

While not coming directly through social media, Charity C referred to other ways in which it indirectly contributes to fundraising. It lends itself to recruitment of participants and volunteers for various events they organise. These people, as part of a huge community effort they have, collect donations on their behalf. Without social media, they would not be as effective in recruitment. Charity B agreed, finding that social media increases the numbers they can recruit for these events. Not only do Charity A recruit through social media, they also encourage recruits to spread their message as much as possible using these platforms. Subsequently, social media plays a large role in boosting their fundraising success. Like Mano (2013, p. 290), they also find that the awareness provided by social media helps them offline, as they have become the organisation that is associated with a cause, and donations and publicity grow as a result. Charity C and the expert agency agreed, finding that even when people are giving offline, they source their decision making information online or on social media.
The issue of measurement, and the difficulties in doing so, manifested itself across all the interviews. The interview responses paralleled the secondary data as referred to in Chapter 2.7.2. Most charities are attempting to measure the impact of social media, but find it quite difficult to produce anything accurate and efficient. The expert agency have found that charities are particularly bad at tracking the success of the various elements that make up their fundraising department. While admitting that it can be particularly difficult to put an accurate measure on these, they do think it can be done a lot better than at present. Charity A agreed saying that it is particularly hard to quantify the success of social media. They can make estimations based on analytics, ecommerce tools and insights but it is very hard to define. Charity C admitted that they don’t track the impact of social media as well as they should. It’s a similar scenario for Charity B who have no tracking measures in place. However, unlike the other interviewee’s, they believe that measurement may not be worth the investment it takes.

The nature of social media has given rise to increased peer to peer giving and charities are starting to reap the benefit. It is a model that Charity A have adopted as their primary fundraising mechanism. In recruiting volunteers to solicit donations from their friends and family, they have outsourced the fundraising process. Nevertheless, they have been very successful at doing so and heavily encourage online donations and the use of social media, because they have found it to be the most effective way “for people to solicit donations from their friends and family”, mirroring the findings of Waddingham (2013, pp. 187-188). The expert agency agreed, pointing out that this is even more effective through social media than it is face to face. Social media allows individuals to portray a perfect self, and promote a cause because “they want to be seen as being charitable and good people”. However, they maintain that the overall cause must be a charity with a good reputation and this is becoming more apparent. Similarly, Charity B have found that people would much rather donate directly to charities, than to an event perceived to have a poor reputation.

Charity C have also experienced this, with requests from friends having much higher response rates than direct requests from organisations, as a result of the apparent shorter social distance. They have benefited enormously from using charity aggregation sites like mycharity.ie, because of the ease of use and fundraising capabilities it allows online between friends. In addition to the charities, the expert agency acknowledged that social media has been a fundamental driver in this peer to peer prosperity. Text donation is another funding format that
has flourished with social media, a finding made by Charity C on many of their recent campaigns. Consistent with the research mentioned previously (Ang, 2011, p. 36; Nah and Saxton, 2013, p. 306), the migration of these elements online has allowed charities to eliminate manual steps and develop online resources, with the associated savings and the ease of use becoming a drivers of social technology adoption.

However, cost is also perceived to be a fundamental barrier in using social media for some charitable organisations, as it has been since online technology became popular in the sector. Setup costs are minimal, but the perception is that operation is free. As well as staff and resource costs, organisations now must pay for promotion, particularly on Facebook. As the expert agency stated, “organic reach is dead”, so charities must pay for extensive reach, adding an expense to long associated costs. Charity A find that other mediums are cheaper and offer better services, but their reach is far smaller than Facebook or even Twitter. Obtaining a budget for this endeavour can be difficult because of the perception that social is free. Without the budget to support it, a campaign will be limited unless it happens to go viral. Charity C noted that they have had to do this and promoted posts that they have paid for perform much better, as expected. Nevertheless, charities struggle to allocate sufficient funding to digital platforms, according to Charity A. This is in spite of it being the fastest growing element of fundraising in most instances, and an opportunity to thrive.

Charity B aside, all respondents believe that social media has an important role to play in the future of fundraising. While they feel that it won’t impact online giving, it does have to be a part of future strategies. They are trying to eliminate high cost fundraising structures and perceive an increase in direct mail solicitation to be the best replacement. Interestingly, Charity C find that direct mail still has an important role to play in fundraising, citing it as one of the most successful mediums with the highest response rate. However, they see social media having a big future in this area in whatever format it will be. Video is a social format they have identified for improving, pointing to the success in this area of charities such as Charity Water. Charity A agree that video has a lot of untapped potential and see YouTube as a greater influence in the future, particularly as it allows annotation through videos and can link directly to donation pages. The expert agency again predict social media to play a key role along with existing, traditional platforms in the future. Nevertheless, they feel charities have to create a more seamless structure, stitching the various elements together better, in order to achieve maximum benefits.
4.4 - Research Question 3: How are social media and the internet affecting Irish charities in the areas of accountability and transparency?

In relation to the comparison of social media capabilities in the charity and for-profit sectors, respondents were split on the issue, much like the secondary information outlined in Chapter 2.3.1. Representatives of Charities A and B felt that charities were behind in this measure. According to Charity A, charities that are “digital-centric” are taking advantage of the possibilities, moving online, to where people are interacting, and growing faster as a result. They explained that the industry is catching up but it is taking a long time, a pattern that the research alludes to for many aspects of the charity sector. Charities are inherently conservative and are slow to allocate budgets towards online fundraising, even though in many instances it’s the fastest growing aspect of the business. Charity C, like Barnes and Andonian (2011), claim that charities, in many instances, are ahead of other businesses on the social media front. They point to charities with over 100,000 followers, support bases that many for-profit companies strive for. The expert agency have also experienced this, with their view being that the level of proficiency varies in every industry. They added that charities have more impetus to try things and are therefore more inclined to do so, and as a result they are at least on a par with for-profit businesses.

A central theme running through the interview process was the impact of recent transgressions by the CRC and Rehab on donations. Charity B think that this has a potential longer term impact on the industry with more revelations likely to emerge in the near future. In their view, a new regulator and a code of governance in the sector will improve the situation and prevent further misdemeanours. The public are now more interested in the use of funds and the salaries of executives, which all the charities interviewed are happy to share. Charity C have experienced that there is an increased level of mistrust among the Irish public following these scandals. People are more alert now and seeking further information and reassurances from charities. They have developed social media as one of the key platforms for providing this. It helps from this point of view because it is what people are using to source their information.

A lot of charities are now run very much like for-profit businesses in terms of structures and goals as reported by Charity A, with wages benchmarked against other industries. Interviewee B agreed that the industry is becoming more professional, due to the public’s increased
understanding of fundraising. Occasionally though there is a certain level of “kickback” from the public, because staff are paid and the organisation is money orientated, according to Charity A. This has again been augmented by the recent transgressions of other organisations within the sector; the ease at which information is disseminated online and broadcast social media a factor as found by Cordery and Baskerville (2011, p. 199). Interviewee B added that the fundraising profession is seen as “dirty” by some people. However, many now have a greater understanding that it is essential for charities to spend money in order to fundraise successfully according to Charity C. Investment is crucial for charities as it allows them to compete for disposable income alongside for-profit businesses. They again attribute the developing public interest in the operations of Irish charities, as a consequence of recent scandals, with fuelling this understanding.

While all respondents agreed that social media can help provide a tangible benefit to donors, three of them were more enthusiastic about its capabilities in doing so. Charity B was hesitant to suggest it could enhance the mediums already available. As a small charity with a limited reputation and a small pool of supporters, they find that social media provides donors with very little benefit. While agreeing that consumers must be shown the outcomes of donations, they don’t think it’s leading to an improved response. The other three contributors see a greater link between social media and improved donor relations. All three remarked that a tangible benefit provided by social media, as outlined by Quinton and Fennemore (2013, p. 38), was essential in developing trust and repeat donations. Charity C stated that the desire to understand the impact of donations has always been there, but it has increased in recent times, with the public more alert due to recent scandals in the sector. Social Media is where people source their information so this is where the charity has to be. It is essential to keep up with recent trends. The expert agency suggested that in displaying benefits through social media, charities should focus on the cause, not the organisation, because, as Charity C added, “people give to people, not fact and figures”. Charity A identified how important trust is in the process of soliciting donations. Social media is the primary tool they use to develop this trust with volunteers and individual donors, showing outcomes as much as possible.

This trust between donors and charities has become vital in amassing repeat donations, in an age when the sector is associated with transgressions. All respondents agreed that speed and reach of information was one of the greatest benefits of the developments in social media. The potential audience is much greater with Charity B pointing to an international reach far beyond
previous capabilities. Having the right social strategy in place to engage with people will leave them more inclined to donate if the prospect arises, with O’Neil (2008, pp. 270-271) alluding to an increased sense of commitment from the donor. This has also been the finding of Charity A who have benefited from increased brand recognition and reputation through social media endeavours. With an extended reach, charities look to extend a positive reputation. They have found that social media is the best way to build a circle of trust between the charity, the recruit and the donor.

With a low costs to fundraising ratio, well below the industry standard, at about 10%, Charity A push this figure as much as possible via social media, building trust, showing reliability and demonstrating value for money. Charity C are also keen to show value for money as this prompts repeat donations. They, along with the expert agency, feel that social media can display this well and is essential in doing so. These charities are preparing for the future by taking advantage of all the disclosure tools available to them, the perceived advantages of which were stated in an earlier chapter (Saxton, Neely and Guo, 2013, p. 141). This differs with Charity B, who state the role of social media is insignificant in this area, in comparison to the mainstream, traditional media. The expert agency also maintain that if people know how a charity is organised and the difference it makes, they are more likely to give again. Therefore it is in the interest of charities to be as transparent as possible. This increased reputation applies both online and offline, with tangible benefits for the charity. With social media now a fundamental element of public relations, it can play a key role in demonstrating efficacy and reinforcing reputation.
CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 - Introduction

The purpose of this examination was to determine how effective Irish charities are in using social media and its capabilities in fundraising and the demonstration of transparency. The number of stakeholders in the charity sector in Ireland is huge, ranging from donors to volunteers and staff. This topic was chosen as a result, because it affects so many people and because there is limited research on the issue, with even less that is applicable to Ireland. Covering such a vast topic required far-reaching and comprehensive efforts in order collect the required level of secondary research, which laid the foundation for the collection of in-depth information during a very successful primary research process. This process allowed the author to answer the research questions while developing an increased self-understanding that is outlined in Appendix 7.

There is no doubt that the arrival of social media has had a huge impact on the charity sector in Ireland, with all respondents, with the exception of Charity B, alluding to a major transformation. The impact has been apparent in many aspects of the sector but the author chose to focus on how well Irish charities apply the technology and the effectiveness it has in the areas of fundraising and demonstrating transparency. These are prominent and pertinent issues in the industry at present, as outlined in Chapter 1. This chapter gives an evaluation of the conclusions derived from an examination of these factors, using both primary and secondary research. This process was thoroughly justified and worthwhile as the author can now conclude what social media can do for Irish charities in comparison to its actual utilisation. These conclusions will be detailed in the ensuing subchapters, guided by the original research questions. In the final subchapter, the author will make recommendations for future research, based on the research findings and the experience of this dissertation process.
5.2 - Research Question 1: How are Irish charities utilising social media and online technology?

Social media has become an indispensable communication tool for larger Irish charities in recent years. Interview respondents alluded several times to a change in social behaviour among the public, prompting an increased utilisation of social networks in order to meet that demand. DiStaso, McCorkindale and Wright (2011, p. 236) also found this and highlighted a cyclical pattern between the growth of social media and the way in which society consumes information, which could also be leading to the growth of charitable organisations. As long as consumer behaviour demands it, Irish charities will have to position it as an essential communication tool. With Charity B less convinced about the movement of the communications mix towards social media, it’s possible that its importance is not as substantial in smaller charities. However, among larger Irish charities, the implication is that it’s essential for growth and performance.

One of the main findings of the research is that there is a favourable social media strategy for charities to adopt in order to mobilise action. A strategy which develops a support base through a high proportion of informative and relationship building messages, before introducing a call to action is the key to successful uptake. Irish charities are following a formula that is repeatedly apparent in the research (Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012, pp. 349-350; Quinton and Fennemore, 2013, p. 46) and one that the expert agency also support. The results of this investigation show that a hierarchical message approach works and correct utilisation should produce near perfect performance, giving charities a template for best practice.

An important revelation in the research was the importance of message content. Many Irish charities lack the skills to create engaging messages that will encourage public support. Secondary research also highlighted this as a barrier to effective utilisation in many organisations (Zorn, Grant and Henderson, 2013, p. 686). Without these skills, and shackled by the conservatism within the industry, some charities are failing to take advantage of what is a radical medium. Messages that are fun, spontaneous and self-perpetuating are effective have the potential to go viral, just like the content of the No Make Up Selfie Campaign (Irish Cancer Society, 2014). Charities with this approach are reaping the rewards. The spread of the Ice Bucket Challenge (Reddy, 2014) in recent weeks, since the interview process, has produced similar outcomes, a feat that Charity B felt wasn’t repeatable. It is another demonstration that
this medium is perfectly equipped to facilitate electronic word of mouth (Quinton and Fennemore, 2013, p. 38), with mammoth possibilities for any charity with the right strategy, producing the right content.

In comparison to the other respondents, Charity B appear less enthusiastic about the benefits of social media, but as easily the smallest member of the research pool, this finding matches the research. Perceived barriers to social media adoption and use were found to be much more apparent among smaller organisations (McCaughey et al., 2014, p. 2; Verheyden and Goeman, 2013, p. 12) and they also perceive fewer benefits. Many of these barriers, including the age profile of social media users and the associated costs, were actually viewed as drivers by bigger charities and areas of untapped potential. Charity B appear to be unclear as to how social media can help them achieve organisational goals and unwilling to invest in order to ascertain if it could. This study implies that smaller charities will realise significant benefits if they further utilise social media, but the sample is too skewed to give this suggestion authority.

5.3 - Research Question 2: Are Irish charities successfully monetising the advances in social media and internet technology?

It’s clear from the primary research that charities find it difficult to fundraise directly from social media sources, with the ramification being that it stunts investment in this area. These results are similar to much of the secondary research, with no research pertaining direct fundraising from social media sources. However, many studies have found that social media can be monetised by charities (Aldridge and Fowles, 2013, p. 53; Mano, 2013, p. 290-292), but the driver to donate and the mechanism used may not be the same. Irish charities have also been able to achieve this success, particularly through the use of charity aggregation sites and text donation. A phenomenon like the No Make Up Selfie campaign demonstrate the considerable possibilities. It’s obvious that the awareness created on social media is leading to donations via these other sources, and that charities with capacity in these methods are reaping the benefits. This study has uncovered the monetary benefits of investing in social media, with huge implications for Irish charities, particularly those that invest little or nothing at the present time.
However, without measurement, making the case for investment becomes difficult, with the secondary research indicating that charities have a limited appreciation of the revenues they achieve as a result of social media use (DiStaso, McCorkindale and Wright, 2011, p. 237). The primary information reiterates this, with measurement proficiencies an area that appears to prevent charities from capitalising on social media. Many struggle to even measure basic indicators such as online versus offline income. The interviews suggest that some charities are reluctant to invest in social media because of uncertainty over returns, consistent with the findings of McCaughey et al. (2014, p. 3). Without measurement capabilities, charities cannot exploit strong performances and may fail to recognise inadequate components. It’s imperative that charities can measure this, even if, as the expert agency suggested, they start with the basics.

Peer to peer fundraising has become a growth area for Irish charities as a consequence of a developing social media presence. The ease at which social media allows recruits to spread a message among friends is apparent, with the success Irish charities find in this process matching Waddingham’s (2013, pp. 178-188) research. With suitable procedures in place, charities can utilise the opportunity social media has presented them, exploit the benefits of a personal request to donate, over the organisational ask and reaping the financial rewards. Shortening the social distance of the request, just as suggested by Bekkers (2010, p. 379), allows charities to monetise the social media contribution of their followers. Aggregation sources are essential to this development along with mobile optimisation, which charities and research alike (Aldridge and Fowles 2013, p. 58) have recognised as critical in the coming years. This research has shown that social media, coupled with the right tools is the simplest and most effective way to do this and should encourage Irish charities to alter strategies accordingly and invest in capabilities.

5.4 - Research Question 3: How are social media and the internet affecting Irish charities in the areas of accountability and transparency?

This study has revealed that there has clearly been a transformation in the Irish charity sector, a fact that was also evident in the secondary research (Ó Cionnaith, 2014). It is however noted from this study that there have been positive results arising from these recent scandals. While charities are still perceived negatively at times, and social media has been used to extend this
type of message, as also found by McCaughey et al. (2014, p. 4), an increased desire for knowledge has educated the public. Heightened interest levels have led people to understand that charities must be run like a business in order to succeed. The public are now aware professionalism is required as charities must first generate income in order to spend money. While social media has helped spread the negative associations, it has also disseminated the information that give people a better understanding, building familiarity and confidence. This should continue to be the case, implying that well-run charities can use it to show transparency and develop trust and reputation through the education of followers.

While charities have lagged behind for-profit business in the ability to provide a tangible benefit for consumers, Quinton and Fennemore (2013, p. 38) suggest that social media can narrow this gap. The primary research agrees with these findings, as organisations must avail of the mediums that the public are using. The desire to this information has heightened in line with the recent transgressions in the CRC and Rehab. Providing regular updates through information, pictures and videos has become an essential way to show the benefits of donations and build a level of trust. Like O’Neill (2008, pp. 270-271), Irish charities have found that building this trust leads to commitment and a desire to donate again and the efficacy of social media in achieving this has been consistently demonstrated. It is where people are sourcing their information, so charities must make their presence felt here, providing the public with the incentive to donate if they ever get a chance. Irish charities must take advantage of the opportunities social media allows to demonstrate transparency.

5.5 – Recommendations for Future Research

The information produced by the dissertation process is very helpful in understanding the role and effectiveness of social media in Irish charities, as there is a dearth of prior research on this topic. However, with only four interviews taking place, it is impossible to generalise the findings across such a vast and diverse sector. Future research could incorporate more interviews among Irish charities and support organisations, adding validity to the research. Future research could expand the sample at both ends of the spectrum, including interviewing charities that spurn online and social media opportunities at present. A larger, diversified sample would produce results that are more reliable and applicable.
A particularly interesting area warranting further investigation is the effectiveness of social media in smaller Irish charities, those that have greater confines on budget and resources. As this study aimed to attain a cross section of information across a varied sector, only one smaller Irish charity could be interviewed, so the results are skewed towards those with further resources. Charity B operates on a completely different standing than the other interviewee’s. Their findings were consistently different to the other, larger organisations and perhaps this is an indicative factor. A larger study, accounting for many smaller sized Irish charities may reveal similar results throughout. On the other hand, it might have been a personal inclination towards social media by the fundraising manager interviewed in this instance, and a more complete study might find them to be the exception. Whichever circumstance exists, it warrants further exploration, as the results of this study cannot necessarily be applied to smaller Irish charities.

Initially, the researcher aimed to solely examine Irish charities and social media from a financial perspective. However, it became apparent that the in-depth examination required would not be possible due to a lack of existing research in the area. One of the major reasons for this, and an issue that was alluded to in all the interviews, is the inability of charities to measure financial success from social media. Although it’s clear that social media does not necessarily assist fundraising campaigns directly, the research proven that it definitely stimulates revenue. A study measuring this capability would be of enormous interest to the industry, with each interviewee acknowledging it as something that charities need to do better. Further understanding of social media will help budgeting, with investment often stunted because of the lack of measurement proficiency. With the requirement that such a study be executed from a donor’s viewpoint, it would encompass a perspective that was missing from this study, but just as significant.

As this is an area that is constantly evolving, the results of this study will only be pertinent for a short period of time. Social media and online technology have changed so much in recent years, and this transformation is likely to continue. Social media is not a fad, but much research alludes to possible changes in future platforms. A repeat of this study, with a larger sample if possible, will produce interesting results with the likelihood of huge changes on the landscape. Again, the results will be applicable throughout the sector, as the range in size and scale of Irish charities will still be apparent. A time lag study would also be interesting, measuring how usage and efficacy evolves over time, with transformations set to continue in both social media
and the charity industry. Indications on the level of change over time would allow charities to allocate resources better to technological transformation.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Brainbase (no date) ‘Kolb’s Learning Styles’ [Online]. Available at:


Shier, M.L. and Handy, F. (2012) 'Understanding online donor behavior: the role of donor characteristics, perceptions of the internet, website and program, and influence from social


APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Interview Questions

1. How have the internet and social media transformed fundraising in Ireland?

2. Can you put a percentage on the level of fundraising achieved from online sources by your organisation?

3. Describe the skills and resources does your organisation have for social media.

4. Can you outline what you perceive are the barriers and challenges for your organisation using social media to be?

5. Can you outline the drivers and benefits for your organisation in adopting and using social media?

6. When generating and planning fundraising campaigns, where does your organisation look to get most of their ideas from?

7. When using social media, which messages do you find are the most useful in your fundraising campaigns – Information, Relationship Building or Calls to Action? Are there reasons why followers and the general public engage with certain messages over others?

8. Are donors looking for more of a tangible benefit when making a donation decision and in what ways do you think social media can help this?

9. Do you feel that charities are behind business in social media adoption and use?

10. Is there a desire in the industry to be organised more like for-profit businesses? Does a heightened sense of social obligation in Irish charities hinder this?
11. Is there a link between good governance, transparency and donations? How has social media and the level of social media use played a role in this?

12. In what ways does your organisation return finance from investment in social media and online tools?

13. Does social media and an online presence benefit offline giving also?

14. Is there evidence to suggest that peer to peer solicitation increases the effectiveness of fundraising campaigns? How do these compare to organisational requests?

15. How do you measure and monitor the results of using social media?

16. Does social media have a future and what potential impact might it have on the landscape of Irish Charity in terms of fundraising?
Appendix 2 - Informed Consent Form

Consent Form

I…………………………………………agree to participate in Pauric Buggy’s research study.

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing.

I am participating voluntarily.

I give permission for my interview with Pauric Buggy to be recorded

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data until August 15\textsuperscript{th} 2014, in which case the material will be deleted.

I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity and the identity of the organisation I work for.

I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the dissertation and any subsequent publications.

Signed…………………………………………… Date…………………………
Appendix 3 - Interview Synopsis A

Interviewee A has over ten years’ experience in the Irish charity sector with multiple organisations. They now represent a global charity with regional branches throughout the world, generating revenues of approximately €2 million in Ireland.

1. How have the internet and social media transformed fundraising in Ireland?

Response A...

• Drastically and Dramatically.
• Biggest paradigm shift in fundraising since TV.
• Big change in the speed that messages can be put out there.
• So easy to donate now. You can put your cause and your donation request beside each other in the same place now.
• TV sent cameras to Ethiopia in the 80’s and that inspired people. That was a big change from radio and description.
• With social media, there’s now an image or a video being watched and a big button asking for a donation in your face at the end of three minutes or accompanying a picture.

2. Can you put a percentage on the level of fundraising achieved from online sources by your organisation?

Response A...

• 96, 97 percent
• Probably one of the highest in charity terms.
• Charity Water in the USA one of the only ones as high.
• No government funding, purely donor financed, therefore percentage not skewed by this.
3. Describe the skills and resources does your organisation have for social media?

Response A...

- Young Organisation but a lot of tech background, not particularly in fundraising. Grown to €100 million in short space of time.
- A lot of resources in house. Dedicated Digital, Fundraising, Web, Content and Development wings.
- Work done in central global offices and adapted to regional preferences. Huge cost savings. Specific managerial staff in regional bases.

4. Can you outline what you perceive the barriers and challenges for your organisation using social media to be?

Response A...

- Different Social Media channels have different barriers and challenges.
- Facebook don’t do a lot for charities but say they do. Can’t donate directly through Facebook.
- No free advertising. Account person every so often, but only really to help you spend money.
- Google give account person and evaluate website. They evaluate Pay per Click (PPC) campaigns and provide free advertising for these which is very helpful.
- YouTube, a Google platform might be most effective. Can add annotations and prompts to videos – Actual Donate buttons.
- Twitter, similar to Facebook. However both can be used to add donation message and videos, but not really set up for that.
- They don’t really solicit donations through Facebook.
5. Can you outline the drivers and benefits for your organisation in adopting and using social media?

Response A...

- It’s great for awareness.
- It’s also the most effective way for people to solicit donations from friends and family. Peer to peer effect.
- People register and then asked to share individual URL’s as much as possible through social and email channels.
- Very cost effective. Try to avoid donation boxes.

6. When generating and planning fundraising campaigns, where does your organisation look to get most of their ideas from?

Response A...

- Look internally a lot of the time. Very few from fundraising background
- Most from tech, advertising or marketing.
- Conscious decision to operate internally and build own platforms. This is good for reliability and they can steer them their own way.
- Also look to other organisations for inspiration, particularly those with a strong web presence, i.e. Livestrong and Charity Water.

7. When using social media, which messages do you find are the most useful in your fundraising campaigns – Information, Relationship Building or Calls to Action? Are there reasons why followers and the general public engage with certain messages over others?

Response A...

- It’s a bit of each type. A lot of relationship and trust building.
- Put up engaging messages, what people want to see. Comedy over harrowing stories work on occasion.
- Information and reminder messages are important around certain points in campaigns – Register or Donate at different times.
- Social Media is a shop front for the organisation.

8. Are donors looking for more of a tangible benefit when making a donation decision and in what ways do you think social media can help this?

Response A...
- Very much so. They spend a lot of time and money showing outcomes.
- It completes trust circle with donors.
- They empower people to raise money on their behalf so trust is crucial. Trust between donor and fundraiser and trust between fundraiser and charity.
- Social media is the best tool to build this trust and is the only real tool used along with the web and email direct marketing. Social is a key tool for supporting these.

9. Do you feel that charities are behind business in social media adoption and use?

Response A...
- Yes.
- The industry is definitely changing but its taking a long time.
- Other charities struggle to allocate budget towards online fundraising, even though it’s the fastest growing channel they have.
- Charities are inherently conservative, it’s the nature of the business.
- Don’t want to be seen taking risks with people’s money so slow to change and move to digital.
- Fastest growing charities are digital centric. Taking advantage of the possibilities. For them, the target market is online so they are “fishing where the fish are”.
- Traditionally charities were looking for rich women in their 50’s.
• It’s about taking advantage of what’s available to you and what your target market want to be a part of.

10. Is there a desire in the industry to be organised more like for-profit businesses? Does a heightened sense of social obligation in Irish charities hinder this?

Response A...
• Yes, I think it does hinder it.
• We are run very much like for profit, structures, etc.
• Money making organisation and keep costs low to drive profit, so to speak.
• However, do get “kickback” from people because staff are paid especially in recent times.
• Wages are benchmarked against for profit industries and that is reflected across the charity sector in general.

11. Is there a link between good governance, transparency and donations? How has social media and the level of social media use played a role in this?

Response A...
• Definitely transparency does help.
• As transparent as possible and regularly post fundraising ratio because it’s so low, at least 5% below industry standard – 15 -25%. Post all financial and annual reports.
• Constantly push the figure out there by social media and on the web to demonstrate transparency and show effectiveness at spending people’s money.
• Charities at high end of scale avoid this. Publishing supports a good reputation and builds donor trust. Like any product, want people to know that they are reliable and are getting value for money.
12. In what ways does your organisation return finance from investment in social media and online tools?

Response A...

- Hard to quantify it. All posts are tracked but you cannot pixel track from platforms like Facebook. EDM’s (email direct marketing) can be followed from delivery to donation.
- Look for spikes in incoming traffic following a Facebook post. They do ask people to use it to solicit donations.
- They know it works, that’s why it’s used. They look at the reach, interactions and clicks from each post and can judge efficacy and plan forward looking strategies.
- They can look at what traffic comes to websites through various sources and estimate how much money comes from these sources, but not specifically.
- Make assumptions on follow through, donations, bounce rate, etc. There is something to see but it’s not as accurate as PPC or EDM that can be followed.

13. Does social media and an online presence benefit offline giving also?

Response A...

- Yes, in the same way that TV or radio does. It’s an awareness piece and another part of the marketing mix.
- It gets the cause out there and builds trust.
- Brand recognition develops. If someone thinks of a certain cause, it helps them think of a certain charity. Its association of thought.
14. Is there evidence to suggest that peer to peer solicitation increases the effectiveness of fundraising campaigns? How do these compare to organisational requests?

Response A...

- The model is based completely on requests from peers. The organisation does not solicit requests from people at all because they find this model works best.
- They guide people on how to spread their message as well as possible among their peers.

15. How do you measure and monitor the results of using social media?

Response A...

- They look at where the incoming traffic comes from, but can’t necessarily know if that leads to a donation or not.
- Measure interactions, likes and retweets, etc. However, likes don’t equal euros.
- It’s a great trust piece and for brand building but it doesn’t do a lot more.

16. Does social media have a future and what potential impact might it have on the landscape of Irish Charity in terms of fundraising?

Response A...

- Yeah, it definitely does but social needs to be monetised successfully
- Will eventually turn into a shop, just a billboard at the minute. Eventually will be able to buy things through Facebook credits or equivalent, which can be accessed as cash by vendors/charities.
- Social currency – charities will have to be on board if it happens. If they don’t they’ll die.

End of Interview (A)
Appendix 4 - Interview Synopsis B

Interview B was conducted with a professional that has vast fundraising experience with charities in both Ireland and the UK. They now work as a Senior Fundraising Manager for a small Irish charity, with revenues of approximately €2 million.

1. How have the internet and social media transformed fundraising in Ireland?

Response B...

- Social Media gets the message out there and to more people.
- Not a lot in terms of raising money.
- Can help in the recruitment of volunteers for community activities.
- Wouldn’t say it has transformed it in any way, shape or form.
- From a fundraising point of view it’s about money, awareness is great but it's not money.

2. Can you put a percentage on the level of fundraising achieved from online sources by your organisation?

Response B...

- Very little comes from online sources.
- Small percentage from online, prompted by something else, direct mail, etc.
- Online donations, less than 5% estimate.

3. Describe the skills and resources does your organisation have for social media?

Response B...

- Dedicated full time executive, covering all social media platforms.
- Great for communicating on fundraising opportunities.
• Networking with possible sources of finance to select you as their charity of choice. More engaging you are on Twitter, the more likely to be selected.
• Can also give you access to opportunities on the off chance and by association.
• Other staff members do small bits on it including the Fundraising Manager. Doesn’t invest patience or time because it doesn’t translate into money.

4. Can you outline what you perceive the barriers and challenges for your organisation using social media to be?

Response B...
• Other successful viral campaigns like the No Make Up Selfie, people are going to expect to replicate the success easily. Boards are going to look to follow this path.
• That wasn’t planned, it just grew and happened to fit well at the time.
• Challenge is to educate people that it can’t be replicated or planned.
• Will never be replicated to the same extent. Other charities have tried and had little success.
• Not easy to raise money through social media.

5. Can you outline the drivers and benefits for your organisation in adopting and using social media?

Response B...
• Message out to a broader audience with more people engaging.
• Message gets out there not just locally and in a community but internationally.
• Researchers can engage with counterparts in the US and the UK.
• News of breakthroughs, research, etc. shared internationally. Couldn’t do this before to same extent.
6. When generating and planning fundraising campaigns, where does your organisation look to get most of their ideas from?

*Response B...*

- Look at what they have done in the past, what has worked, learn from that. Learn from changing environment.
- Treks to Great Wall of China can’t be done any more. People feel they are donating towards someone’s holiday.
- In the past they would have raised a few million but charities are pulling the plug on these. People would rather donate directly to the charity.
- Easier to fundraise individually when people know you’re covering your own costs.
- Trying to eliminate long running members draw campaign, costs are very high.
- To find something to replace it, they are looking to direct mail. Acquiring new donors and developing current ones. Trying to convert doers into donors. Harder than acquiring new donors.
- Learnings are the same from all campaigns no matter what the scale. Previous experience in large UK charity has thought that.
- Look at counterparts in US and UK too. See if they can make it Irish – don’t necessarily work here.
- Trying to look at the bigger scale stuff in the office and have community volunteers continue the local work. Moving away from centralising that. A lot of work for limited return.

7. When using social media, which messages do you find are the most useful in your fundraising campaigns – Information, Relationship Building or Calls to Action? Are there reasons why followers and the general public engage with certain messages over others?

*Response B...*

- Information on research or breakthroughs is the most effective.
• Followers not interested in fundraising campaigns.
• Unsure about the effect of Relationship Building and limited use of Calls to Action. Mostly used for Information sharing.

8. Are donors looking for more of a tangible benefit when making a donation decision and in what ways do you think social media can help this?

Response B...
• Things are different there, it’s a small organisation, trying to do big things.
• Reputation is not very large.
• Donors understand that an immediate benefit is unlikely, whether they require charitable aid themselves or it’s a family member.
• There may be a breakthrough at some stage medically. Doesn’t think social media will help show tangible benefits.
• People want to know you’re spending their money responsibly. Social media can help this but it won’t enhance response.
• Specific fundraising, about a research project in a University that is being paid for will lead to a higher response rate. More specific ask in terms of direct mail gives higher response rate and gift ratio.

9. Do you feel that charities are behind business in social media adoption and use?

Response B...
• To a certain degree, yes.
• Social Media does serve a purpose for charity to engage with potential corporate partner.
• Lidl have done this in Ireland with charity partners and spread the message.
• Plays a role in engaging and starting a conversation. Face to face still needed to get results.
10. Is there a desire in the industry to be organised more like for-profit businesses? Does a heightened sense of social obligation in Irish charities hinder this?

**Response B...**

- In some cases it does. New regulator should help the sector.
- Charity and fundraising can sometimes be seen as dirty in Ireland and you can’t ask people for money.
- However, government doesn’t fund all the essential charities.
- Industry is becoming more professional as people have a better idea of what fundraising is. Progression has been helped by the setup of Fundraising Ireland and third level diploma/certificate courses.
- However, duplicate charities are still a problem. All similar charities centralised under one heading and cause would be much more effective. Save on costs, admin, time, effort, etc.

11. Is there a link between good governance, transparency and donations? How has social media and the level of social media use played a role in this?

**Response B...**

- There is and will become more apparent with charities signing up to a code of governance.
- It shows transparency and not to be hiding anything.
- Impact will be greater long term with probably more information to come out in charities, similar to that of Rehab and the CRC.
- These scandals have impacted donations People want to know where money is being spent and salaries of executives. They are happy to share that.
- Social media isn’t going to play a major role. It’s in all media, and the small element social takes up will come into it. Mainstream media will have a much greater role.
12. In what ways does your organisation return finance from investment in social media and online tools?

Response B...

- Working out a return on investment in this area is hard to do.
- The role in this organisation isn’t just about fundraising but communication and awareness more so.
- Couldn’t put a financial measure on it.

13. Does social media and an online presence benefit offline giving also?

Response B...

- Unsure, to be honest, would say I doesn’t. Probably with young audience to a certain degree.
- Will not make someone in 50s or 60s donate. It depends on your target.

14. Is there evidence to suggest that peer to peer solicitation increases the effectiveness of fundraising campaigns? How do these compare to organisational requests?

Response B...

- Depends what you're fundraising for.
- Request to a friend socially will lead to a donation over a corporate letter of request. However, they’re not target givers – they're middle aged women, potential legators.
- Focus is on big picture. Face to face has a value in terms of major gifts and legacy giving, but not on the street – it takes too long for little reward.
15. How do you measure and monitor the results of using social media?

Response B...
- Not sure that they measure that well, especially from a fundraising point of view.
- Social media supports campaigns but this is not measured. Difficult to do and unsure if effort put into measurement is worth it.

16. Does social media have a future and what potential impact might it have on the landscape of Irish Charity in terms of fundraising?

Response B...
- Has a future. Definitely a role to play.
- Does not see it having a huge impact on the future of Irish charities. Social media will not have huge impact on online giving as a medium.
- No enormous long term impact but it has to be part of planning for the future.

End of Interview (B)
Appendix 5 - Interview Synopsis C

Interviewee C has several years’ experience with a large Irish charity and holds the Head of Fundraising role within that organisation. A large organisation within the heavily populated Irish sector, the charity has an annual income in excess of €20 million.

1. How have the internet and social media transformed fundraising in Ireland?

Response C...

- Considerably. Looking back, it’s all online now – registering for activities, fundraising for events, people now interact and register online. All interactions with charity and information is online.
- Phenomenal change. No more writing in. Facebook as a social media now lends itself to recruitment and community and event interaction around different charity events. Twitter is a bit less successful at this.
- Mobile is a complete transformation, they are at the forefront. Money transactions, text donations; it’s a complete transformation from money boxes. It’s now through the phone bill.
- Before it was Direct Debits and writing in with credit card details.
- Cost saving benefits are huge, all can be done online. This applies to all industries. Resources are saved too by moving everyone to an online system and limiting manual interactions.

2. Can you put a percentage on the level of fundraising achieved from online sources by your organisation?

Response C...

- From a €20 million organisation three separate campaigns that were nearly all online or text donation sources raised €700,000, €100,000 and €2 million respectively.
- A lot of individuals raising money and sponsorship on their behalf use sites like My Charity to collate raised funds online and through social media.
- This is not very well analysed and should be. Many campaigns raise funds this way.
- A top of the head figure is easily 20%, possibly a good bit more.
- One of the leaders in terms of text donations and on a par with peers, the bigger charities in terms of funds from online.
- A larger part of fundraising is community based than other charities, hence they’re more successful online through things like My Charity. The public have responded to this method of raising funds and they have aided that along with My Charity.

3. Describe the skills and resources does your organisation have for social media?

Response C...
- Social Media Manager, Online Manager…. Three dedicated staff in total in the area. Other departments including fundraising would use Social Media from time to time also, liaising with experts and the Communications team.
- Campaigns used to be TV, press and radio – now its online advertising, social media, web advertising… social is right in the mix. Learning in these areas all the time.

4. Can you outline what you perceive the barriers and challenges for your organisation using social media to be?

Response C...
- It’s all new and it’s going to take investment to do well.
- Would love to lead but need the capacity to invest.
- It’s so new – always looking for a return on investment – this is harder to predict when it’s new.
• Proven media is chosen over new media because they have to meet targets and returns.
• Attracting the best talent is also difficult. They are going to work for top IT firms rather than charities with lower pay levels.

5. Can you outline the drivers and benefits for your organisation in adopting and using social media?

Response C...
• It’s how the market wants to support. They are on social media, they are on mobile phones.
• A campaign linked with a live TV appearance saw 95% donate through text, the next biggest percentage was web and finally very few used telephone, the traditional format of telethons.
• A waiting call centre was barely used, €700,000 came in in one night thanks to TV, text and the ripple effect on social media.
• This is how consumers choose to support now. People have phones, tablets, etc., with them when watching TV. They’re not turning on computers.
• A viral campaign that spread on Facebook- they had the Facebook presence, resources and text lines to accommodate that. This campaign driven by consumer behaviour rather than anything else. The charity has to be in a position to harness this behaviour.
• Cost saving in terms of printing and postage is another driver. All can be done online and through social media.
• However, writing to people and asking for a donation is still one of the most successful way of generating funds. Has been successful for a long time. Response rate way higher than emails. The electronic nature of emails and spam culture might account for that.
• Consumer behaviour definitely biggest driver. Have had to adapt to this and always will.
6. When generating and planning fundraising campaigns, where does your organisation look to get most of their ideas from?

Response C...

- Other markets, other charities, adapt and copy.
- What’s working here and what worked before.
- Learn from the experience of previous campaigns. What worked well… essential things such as urgency and emotion. People give to people, not fact and figures.
- Deadline emergencies and engaging personal stories will be more successful.

7. When using social media, which messages do you find are the most useful in your fundraising campaigns – Information, Relationship Building or Calls to Action? Are there reasons why followers and the general public engage with certain messages over others?

Response C...

- Information and Relationship building would be the most successful.
- Facebook is good for this. As a medium for raising funds, as an aside for the likes of the No Make Up Selfie viral campaign, it’s not a successful medium for generating donations.
- It’s successful at recruiting people and that’s where the donation comes from. Twitter less so. Emails are only good for information but excellent at that. Follow ups, receipts, etc.
- Recent events they’ve advertised on Facebook and paid for promoted posts on Facebook also as this has to be done now for reach. People are doing the recruiting on their behalf, tagging friends suggesting they do that.
- Electronic word of mouth so to speak. Been very successful in recruiting this way. The call to action is coming from a friend. Phenomenally successful at extending the reach of activities.
8. Are donors looking for more of a tangible benefit when making a donation decision and in what ways do you think social media can help this?

Response C...

- Undoubtedly they are, they always have been.
- It is critical to get people to understand the impact of their donation, especially for repeat donations.
- If people are using social media, this is how it has to be shown. This is how this information is consumed now. They have to be on there and constantly updating the website and linking with popular websites for consumers. Impact can then be demonstrated.
- People are a bit more alert to that because of the recent scandals.
- They have always recognised and have been up front with information.
- Charities that are doing a good job are upfront with this information and people are now seeking it a little bit more.

9. Do you feel that charities are behind business in social media adoption and use?

Response C...

- In certain case ahead of business. They have 100,000 followers on Facebook. Commercial organisations would love that. Definitely on par if not ahead of for-profit.
- Use it as much as possible for various functions from all departments. Interacting with these followers.
- By no means the leaders. Some charities like Charity Water are doing great things with YouTube videos and social media. A lot of success built on that. Using the video platform can be very effective and they’ve a lot of work to do on this.
10. Is there a desire in the industry to be organised more like for-profit businesses? Does a heightened sense of social obligation in Irish charities hinder this?

Response C...

- Not to a huge degree.
- Slightly in the fact that people need to understand that they need to generate money to do what they do. Investing in campaigns, activities, etc.
- People don’t differentiate between for-profit and charity marketing. All competing for a share of disposable income. Don’t necessary allocate to charity.
- Have to make a case for the discretionary spend unless someone has a relationship with the charity. Competing with big commercial organisations, have to spend money and use top companies to beat these.
- Limited amount of pro bono work, they take what they can get but only goes so far.
- Attitudes are getting better towards this. That’s the good thing about recent scandals.
- It was discussed and now people have a better understanding that you have to spend money to make it. They try to spend the proper amount that reflects what they are trying to achieve.

11. Is there a link between good governance, transparency and donations? How has social media and the level of social media use played a role in this?

Response C...

- Of course social media can.
- Social media also helps cost savings. People realise if your using it and online heavily, then you’re getting value for money.
- It’s the medium people use for information and can highlight governance and annual reports, etc.
- It’s a policy to be transparent. A lot of charities have been doing this for a long time.
• Social media helps extend the reach of this information, it’s all online. Extending the reach is a positive because it’s extending a good reputation.

12. In what ways does your organisation return finance from investment in social media and online tools?

Response C...
• They do get a return from investment.
• Part of the recruitment media they use to get people to support the organisation. It drives people to donate online and also to text donate.
• It definitely increase the number of people that participate at events in a cost effective way. If they can’t recruit these people, they wouldn’t get the donations.

13. Does social media and an online presence benefit offline giving also?

Response C...
• In a lot of cases people get their initial information online and then look to collect offline through a sponsorship card. They complement each other.
• In responding offline to a direct mail piece, people check online to evaluate transparency, areas of programmes, governance, etc. This also influences decisions.

14. Is there evidence to suggest that peer to peer solicitation increases the effectiveness of fundraising campaigns? How do these compare to organisational requests?

Response C...
• Absolutely. Response rates are much better when a volunteer or recruit passes something among friends rather than receiving an email straight from the charity.
• They get a certain number of recruits and then ask people to either get further recruits or donations from their friends. This is targeted through social media and using resources such as My Charity to collect the funds online.

15. How do you measure and monitor the results of using social media?

Response C...

• They look at response rates as much as they can.
• They observe recruitment through suggested Facebook posts using Google Analytics. Response rates, inquiries, registration levels are all measured.
• Measure the number of people who donate online as oppose to return a donation form.
• Measure on donation page, “Where did you hear about us”, etc. Not always precise measure but it gives some indication.

16. Does social media have a future and what potential impact might it have on the landscape of Irish Charity in terms of fundraising?

Response C...

• Yeah, it definitely has a future.
• Websites will always be there and interaction will happen some way or the other.
• Worry what will happen to Facebook and Twitter. Could go the way of Bebo although they are a different demographic.
• Kids already off Facebook to Instagram and Snapchat and other things. Don’t understand them at the minute but will have to.
• These things always evolve, always onto something else. If it’s free it will work.
• It will be on the mobile phone.
• If that’s where the market is, interacting and gathering information, getting informed – the charity needs to be there.

End of Interview (C)
Appendix 6 - Interview Synopsis D

Interview D was conducted with an expert agency that supplies essential creative planning services to a variety of organisations in the charity sector. The agency provided staff with roles in Planning, Consumer Insights and Social Media for a group interview. In studying and supporting the sector, these individuals have collated a mass of diverse knowledge pertinent to the dissertation topic.

1. How have the internet and social media transformed fundraising in Ireland?

Response D...

- No Make Up Selfie is the biggest reference. Before it was hard to find something that turned social media into money for charities.
- Shows that if you can find something consumers want to get behind and share, it can be done.
- Inbuilt viral nomination element is what made it successful – it’s self-perpetuating.
- Need to think about social behaviour. Others like the tap UNICEF campaign hadn’t the same viral element, didn’t get passed on.
- One person started it and cancer charities tapped into something that already existed. Always the best way.
- A task that was simple and could be done there. The immediacy of social media and text donate is a brilliant opportunity. It was also based on sharing model that people understood – familiarity is crucial.
- Others have tried to recreate with models that were time consuming and cumbersome and with credit cards. The more steps, the less simplicity, the more opportunity for people to drop out.
2. Can you put a percentage on the level of fundraising achieved from online sources by charity organisations you work with?

Response D...

- Would find it very difficult to put a figure on that.
- Some would have occasional successful campaigns and online shops but in general it’s quite a small proportion.
- They find that charities are poor at tracking these things as well and couldn’t tell you what percentage came from online if they were asked.
- Not tracking as well as they could or should.
- Could be coming into sector soon. It’s the easiest income medium to track.
- There is nothing simple to fundraise directly from a social media source. It usually drives you to another method, as was the case with the No Make Up Selfie.

3. Describe the skills and resources do for charity organisations you’ve worked with have for social media?

Response D...

- Bigger ones tend to have a lot of in-house resources.
- Smaller ones might have one or two people as resources that do everything under the communications heading.
- Have found that message tends to focus on limitations of the charity, rather than on the consumer. What do they want to do, what is fun, etc? No Make Up Selfie worked because it was fun and people wanted to do it.
- Project owners in charities get involved with the social media staff also in a lot of charities when required. With so many projects running at once, it can be difficult to prioritise, especially in bigger charities.
4. Can you outline what you perceive the barriers and challenges for charity organisations you’ve worked with in using social media to be?

Response D...

- Resources can be a major challenge. Having the skill and confidence to know what engages people online is important.
- For example, charities working in Africa have the chance to tell a story well through Instagram or Vine, but fearing what they don’t understand, many don’t. Confidence and training limits this.
- Budget is another limitation because organic reach is dead. Organisations using Facebook need to pay for promoted posts to show up in feeds.
- Budgets need to be there to support. Otherwise, unless it goes viral, it won’t get supported.
- Social is perceived as free, but it’s not really. As a result it’s not getting the budget allocation from the top of organisations.
- Social Media itself is a barrier. It’s seen as radical and charities tend to be conservative and unwilling/unknowing in the area.
- The medium is a barrier in this sense because they tend to convey harrowing, sad, guilt inducing messages. It’s a cultural clash.
- Social works on fun, light heartedness, spontaneity and transparency. They should work more towards this with personality and showing a human side.
- Some charities are good at this but many struggle to engage. They have seen some interesting stuff but are not adjusting the message appropriately for the variety of valuable social options available.

5. Can you outline the drivers and benefits for charity organisations you’ve worked with to adopt and use social media?

Response D...

- Transparency is a huge benefit. With accusations and mistrust huge in Ireland right now. Social can be great at sowing how donations are used.
• Some, including the Irish Cancer Society are particularly good at showing what they are doing, showing real life stories.
• Engaging with people is down to having the right social media strategy, that’s the challenge. But the benefit if you get this right is that they’ll be more open to donate when the opportunity arises.
• Social media is a closer channel for people to engage with you than other channels might be.
• Twitter can be good for this because users are more active there and supposedly more politically aware. It’s more useful from an advocacy point of view.
• Also, Twitter allows charities to partner with major organisations on social media, just as Oxfam recently did with 2FM. This partnership allowed them to extend their reach to a much larger and wider audience, increasing awareness, engagement and followers.

6. When generating and planning fundraising campaigns, where does your organisation look to get most of their ideas from?

Response D...

• A lot look locally, looking at what other charities have brought in successfully. They will also look to the UK.
• International charities look to what others in their network have done and local charities will look to equivalents abroad.
• They will also look to creative agencies and pay for expertise and market knowledge.
• One of the best thing charities can do is go out of category for ideas. Consumers are consumers, exposed to everything, not just charity.
• The best thing for something like the green movement could be to appeal to a consumer need first and show the dual benefit. That way your appeal has a larger prospective audience.
• Put the consumer need first and the ask second. It can be a strong combination in the charity sector and makes engagement possible.
7. When using social media, which messages do you find are the most useful in your fundraising campaigns – Information, Relationship Building or Calls to Action? Are there reasons why followers and the general public engage with certain messages over others?

Response D...

- Social media is great for advocacy. Put out a point of view and it can get people to listen.
- Charities are trying to connect to a wider audiences and trying to connect with the experiences they are having. Social media can be a great link here.
- Use all three options to different degrees but what has been harder has been the understanding of how to link it to fundraising, getting the action from followers. They need to link these together more.
- There needs to be an action to donate linked to stories, because some people do donate just because of these. With no action, they definitely don’t. We’ve seen this work on some campaigns.
- Simply having the invite to donate really can help. Charities don’t always stitch messages together as well as they can.

8. Are donors looking for more of a tangible benefit when making a donation decision and in what ways do you think social media can help this?

Response D...

- They are. From talking to donors since the recent scandals we’ve noticed that they are looking for two things particularly.
- They’ve always wanted to know about the money being spent and transparency. That is an absolute must now.
- They also want to know about the efficacy of their donations, because that money is hard earned and they’d like to know it made a difference.
- The appetite for this has ratcheted up a lot recently.
We’ve also found that if consumers know the difference the donation is making, they are more likely to give again. It’s in charities benefit to provide information and solicit repeat donations.

Social media can provide huge benefits in this area. Showing that 80c or 85c of every euro went somewhere, that’s very important.

Charities can provide daily updates very simply using social media. They are doing this on some projects and supporters know exactly what the donation has paid for.

Peer to peer is a great way to kick start a crowd funder. What we’ve said to charities is that people give people or causes, not organisations. They should promote the cause not the organisation. Social can be great for this.

9. Do you feel that charities are behind business in social media adoption and use?

Response D...

- No, don’t really think so.
- Skill levels can vary from one business to another and so does social media use. It’s not always appropriate or the same model doesn’t fit for all.
- Established for profit businesses vary in this area, as will charities. Interactions are relatively similar in all sectors.
- Charities can be more inclined to try things because they’ve the impetus to do so.
- Every charity they know is on social media. They might not be ahead of for-profit business but they are certainly not behind.

10. Is there a desire in the industry to be organised more like for-profit businesses? Does a heightened sense of social obligation in Irish charities hinder this?

Response D...

- It varies a lot. They have to be really though because in order to give money, they have to make money.
• The level of sophistication and understanding really varies though.
• Most charities are motivated by raising money and fundraising. Advocacy efforts should be linked more to this and transparency as well.

11. Is there a link between good governance, transparency and donations? How has social media and the level of social media use played a role in this?

Response D...
• There definitely is a link there. Efficacy is crucial again. If people know it’s there and the charity is well run, they are more likely to participate.
• Social media can definitely reinforce that transparency and people will be more likely to engage.
• Reputation is hugely involved in this. Social media is a form of PR so it definitely can help here.

12. In what ways does your organisation return finance from investment in social media and online tools?

Response D...
• When you put out an ask, you don’t know how people will donate. That is a difficulty.
• A lot of charities target older women, “empty nesters” in their 50s. Older people tend to give the most.
• Even though you might contact them through text, email, social media etc. There are a number of different ways they might choose to donate, text, call, drop in centres.
• Charities don’t do a good job of tracking and putting countermeasures in place.
• Even simply making sure that the cost of a campaign is paid for, in addition to the funds raised. That would be a return on a marketing campaign. Most don’t even have something this simple in place.
• Another thing is that people don’t rely on one channel over another. Second screening, watching TV while on tablets/phones, is hugely prominent.
• One influences the other so it’s hard to isolate what is doing what. Any business is going to have difficulty identifying the path. Paths are getting longer with more sources.

13. Does social media and an online presence benefit offline giving also?

Response D...
• Yes, definitely. The information and the stories help.
• In the future if will be beneficial if charities will be able to knit all the different communication channels together. Some people are likely to go back traditional channels, no matter what channel the communication comes from initially.
• The more seamless and easy things are for consumers in the future, the better things will be for charities.

14. Is there evidence to suggest that peer to peer solicitation increases the effectiveness of fundraising campaigns? How do these compare to organisational requests?

Response D...
• People might connect with an individual story more than a group one, and be moved by it.
• But people will want to know who the overall cause is. Charities that are better known or with a better reputation have a greater chance.
• Being introduced to something by a friend can be better because you may be more likely to trust them than a logo or a brand.
• No Make Up Selfie was people talking to each other but acting as advocates for cancer support, a popular, reputable cause.
• People can be more likely to support a cause on social media again because they want to present a perfect self. It’s interesting to follow the psychology
of social media. They want to be seen to do good and it’s something charities can take advantage of.

- There is a slight social pressure on people to be seen to donate among friends on social media, this can help causes hugely. It’s a great way to combine a personal ask with a charity ask.
- People want to show the best of themselves on social media and friends want to be seen to be associated with this.

15. How do you measure and monitor the results of using social media?

*Response D...*

- They have all the metrics and Facebook insights. Some have applications which enable donations and obviously they can be tracked. They should be using whatever e-commerce tools they have also.
- One charity even have an app embedded in their Facebook page (UNICEF Ireland), allowing traceable donations from there.
- This is great because once on Facebook, people don’t like moving off it.
- Charities have enough in house expertise in this area yet. Clients in for-profit business don’t either. The area is constantly evolving and there is always something new to know.
- They all tend to track engagement and repeat engagement rather than turning it into something like the No Make Up Selfie phenomenon and something concrete and useable, like a donation.

16. Does social media have a future and what potential impact might it have on the landscape of Irish Charity in terms of fundraising?

*Response D...*

- It definitely has a future. The effect it has depends on how it gets used by charities.
• They need to know how best to reach the consumer on all channels and social media will be a part of this.
• TV traditionally gave presence and authority to a campaign. Different channels are used to raise the funds; Digital for a click through, or maybe SMS.
• The key to success for charities will be understanding how social media comes into this mix, drawing consumers to engage and support a charity.
• They have to learn to use it better. They’ve seen loads of cases - charities use to many boring stories. For social media, they’ve got to try and make it fun, accentuate the positive.
• You’re more likely to donate blood if you see your friend has done it rather than reacting to a story. People are social animals, they copy each other. They like to be involved.
• Charities have low engagement and support on their pages because they speak from their own point of view and put up guilt and worth inducing messages. This is to be avoided because it puts defences up straight away for people.
• They should think of what people are more likely to share. People like sharing fun experiences over sad stories.
• Social media is going to be around but it has to be linked to other mediums. TV and digital are going nowhere.
• However, social is changing particularly among the younger people. They are turning away from Facebook to WhatsApp, Snapchat, etc. Who knows what it will be in five years’ time but charities will have to move with it.
• The platforms that have become more commercialised, people are disengaging from them. Charities have to be aware of this. The channels they operate in are as important as the messages they put out.

End of Interview (D)
Appendix 7 - Self Reflection on Learning

Introduction

This section of the paper is designed to show the learning experience of the researcher throughout the process of the dissertation, by way of a conscious, reflective analysis of the knowledge and skills developed and attained. This process allows the researcher to indicate areas of improvement required in order to fulfil career goals, but also to identify positive developments that will assist this realisation. Challenges faced and overcome along the way will be analysed as well as significant achievements and observations. It is important to look at the theory behind the learning process, understand how the researcher relates to this and analyse the practical learning that has taken place over the course of this dissertation. The ensuing reflection will denote this, first examining learning styles before explaining the skill development that has taken place. In doing this it is important to comprehend the learning background of the author, a professional in the area of sports development with an education background in Sport and Exercise Sciences.

Learning Styles

In reflecting on the dissertation experience it is impossible not to examine the learning. It is an experience that happens every day in the course of our lives, and one which results in the development of skills and knowledge. Kolb (1984, p. 38) describes the process of learning as follows: “Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience”. This quote is further explained by Kolb’s (1984, p. 25) diagram below (Figure 6.1), which outlines the cycles that any individual, including the author, goes through when learning. Relating to how we think about and do things, the model infers that each stage enhances the learning already made, and allows further development of this learning. At its basic level, the model implies that individuals gain more knowledge and skills by utilising the fundamentals at each stage of the cycle.
The diagram demonstrates how a learner develops knowledge through each of the four aspects of the cycle, which are:

Concrete Experiences: Feelings and learnings an individual gains from experiences.

Reflective Observations: Instances whereby the learner makes judgements and gains knowledge through watching and observing.

Abstract Conceptualisation: Through thinking, and applying experiences to theory, an individual learns.
Active Experimentation: The learner discovers through doing, using theories to guide actions.

Building on the work of Kolb, Honey and Mumford developed a four-way classification model (Brainbase, no date), based on the styles of learning developed by Kolb. The four different types of learners and their characteristics are as follows:

The Activist: Activists involve themselves fully in new experiences and learn immediately from them. Dynamic and open-minded, they learn mostly through experiences.

The Reflector: This type of learner draws on many sources of information before coming to a conclusion. Observations and experiences are the pillars of this reflective process.

The Theorist: This type of learner tries to apply observations to existing theories in a logical manner. Certainty and subjective thoughts are crucial to this individual.

The Pragmatist: Pragmatists like to try things out to see if they work. They learn through seeking challenges and trying to solve problems.

In order to assign a learner type to an individual, Honey and Mumford developed a questionnaire (Brainbase, no date) which the author has completed. The results reveal the researcher to have pragmatic and theorist characteristics to the fore (see questionnaire - Appendix 8). This implies that the researcher is keen to fully understand things, either through analysis or testing them out. These scores suggest that the individual is extremely practical and likes to learn by developing certainty and logic.

The author agrees with these findings, as they mirror everyday occurrences whereby they always try to find the logic and reason in situations before conclusions are arrived at. This is best accomplished by immersing oneself into an experience and learning from that. During the dissertation process, this learning style meant that the author performed research and analysis meticulously. However, it did mean that they required logic and understanding before moving on. This delayed the process but meant that the research was more accurate and thought through. The dissertation process has definitely helped the author become more of a reflector. The nature of the research methodology facilitated this by making it necessary. With a very
low activist score, it is clear that the researcher does not like to rush through the learning process. Learning is not a fixed formula and it’s clear that the author has a multimodal style, relying on some elements more than others. While these characteristics were somewhat apparent before, this evaluation will help the author develop into a more rounded learner, achieving better balance and consequently becoming a better manager.

Development of Skills

The dissertation is the key element of the MBA programme and is weighted to reflect this. The process proved to be extremely challenging but extremely beneficial in terms of skills and knowledge developed. Deficiencies are there to be worked on while strengths can always be improved. The diverse nature of the dissertation process has made the author much more rounded and capable person, set up for a lifetime of continuous professional development. New opportunities are now more likely to be sought while the skills and knowledge acquired will be further developed. Many of these are essential in furthering the author’s career, the most important of which are detailed in the subsequent subchapters.

Time Management

Time management is an essential skill for any student, particularly one studying part-time. I was fully aware of this before commencing the MBA programme but it became increasingly apparent as the course continued. From an early stage in the dissertation process, I realised that my time management skills were not as good as I thought they were. The timeline was much more condensed than it had been at any stage of the MBA. Despite warnings and advice from my supervisor, I made a bad start to managing my time. Looking at the project as a whole, I failed to narrow my topic early enough and performed a raft of unnecessary research. Consequently, I spent too long on insignificant details, neglecting established plans and the larger picture.

It was only when I divided the component parts effectively that I began to develop efficiency and make consistent progress. I discovered the necessity and power of deadlines, having had to adjust earlier dates due to my sluggish start to the process. A previously absent level of
personal discipline had to be reached through reflection on priorities. Eventually, when back on track, I gained a sense of satisfaction from achieving goals and reaching milestones, motivating me to redouble my efforts and complete tasks ahead of time. Consequently, I can honestly say that the completion of this assignment, the largest of my life, has produced the least stress of any throughout the MBA, a reflection of the improvement in my management skills throughout the process. These skills are a huge requirement in my career and easily transferrable across disciplines. The skill development has been evident in my recent work, the quantity of which has also been condensed to a previously unmatched level.

**Critical Thinking and Analysis**

Having targeted it as a skill I had to develop prior to commencing this MBA programme, the improvement I’ve made in my critical analysis skills over the course of the dissertation has been very welcome. In the past I’ve been far too quick to jump to conclusions, rush into an approach or proceed without questioning assumptions. I’ve realised my mistakes as I’ve made them but haven’t seemed to learn from them. The dissertation process, in particular, has forced me to slow down and get an overview of situations before proceeding. It has also taught me to look back on my actions, reviewing them and the whole experience with a view to the next challenge, allowing me to think further ahead than the present moment.

Before this process, I was inclined to take information and reports at face value. The secondary research process led me to question things more than ever. Contrasting opinions emerging in journals have required further investigation, leading me to transfer this practice into other areas. The analysis of the four interviews in particular, was a procedure that enhanced my critical skills enormously. Never before have I been faced with such a comprehensive analysis task. Getting the required information from those lengthy transcripts, was a tedious but worthwhile process, allowing me to reach a level of comprehension I did not anticipate. I have a much greater understanding of the meaning of critical analysis and its importance in a manager’s skillset. The realisation of my capabilities in this area has given me the confidence to further apply it to my professional endeavours.
Interviewing and Communication Skills

I particularly enjoyed the interview process but looking back on, it’s something I’ve learned a tremendous amount from. When developing a methodology, I was completely comfortable with undertaking interviews. Communication, particularly on a one to one basis, is an area I’ve always assumed I performed well. Therefore, I was confident in the knowledge that I would I have no issues carrying out four interviews.

However, I realised when practicing with a friend prior to the first interview that my skills needed to improve quickly. Listening to the recording, I realised that my communication was not as effective as I had assumed, with frequent mumbling and a general lack of coherency and clarity. This had repercussions for my research because my skills were an essential tool in procuring quality, in-depth data. I practiced heavily ahead of the first interview and managed to improve significantly in time. There was a noticeable learning effect from the first interview to the last, which is not ideal for reliability purposes but it does enhance my overall skillset. Good communication skills are a requirement in nearly every job, but a necessity for me on a daily basis. Having identified a shortfall, it’s something I’m actively modifying, noticing the improvement in my capabilities in a short space of time.

Application of Learning

The dissertation experience, among many things, has definitely been a rewarding experience for me. From an initial base of uncertainty and trepidation towards select a topic, I’ve grown, becoming engrossed in the process and all the aspects related to it. My goals at the beginning of this MBA, of maximising knowledge and skills, have not been realised, nor will they ever be. However, they have been significantly enhanced and my desire to develop them has been further augmented. The dissertation element of the course has been the final step in this. An assignment I was incredibly fearful of has turned into a learning experience. The fulfilment of such a momentous requirement can only improve an individual’s personal, academic and professional future.

The dissertation process has allowed me to apply the knowledge I’ve gained on the last two years. This application to the topic itself provided me with huge insight into the charity sector
and social media, knowledge that could be applied to current work practices, which has already transpired, improving the quality of any decisions made since. I have a much greater understanding of both aspects and have enhanced my employability in either area. Other, more subtle learnings occurred during the last twelve weeks, the effects of which have already been implemented in the workplace. Research skills can be applied to many roles as can the writing skills associated with this dissertation. There has been a necessary and noticeable improvement in these over the last twelve weeks. Conducting interviews opened the author up to a completely new mode of data collection. Originating from a science background and with heavy pragmatic tendencies, this format was refreshing and informative. The process has required the author to develop an increased level of self-discipline and open mindedness, two qualities that will certainly assist future endeavours.

Coming out of this MBA experience, my confidence in my own capabilities is at an all-time high. I have learned to trust myself, reject fears and doubts and pursue opportunities that present themselves to me. In the past I have been slow to sell myself, looking for excuses not to succeed rather than reasons why I could not. I did not exploit the opportunities that presented themselves to me or address obvious shortcomings in my skillset. If I was going to progress in my career, it was important that I moved towards this positive approach. Nobody is going to respond to a manager who is ambiguous, indecisive and hesitant. I’ve confirmed that I possess the strengths require to become a leader. The skills I’ve acquired through this dissertation process and the MBA as a whole have set me up for this. I can now put myself into positions in which I was uncomfortable before, with the utmost confidence in my abilities. I’m looking at opportunities now, analysing the reasons why they’re perfect for me rather than the reason why they aren’t for me; reasons I’ve fixated on before. This MBA experience has equipped me with a vast range of skills that can be put to use in any situation and for any organisation.
LEARNING STYLES

Kolb's learning styles have been adapted by two management development specialists, Peter Honey and Alan Mumford. They use a four-way classification that closely resembles that of Kolb but is simplified for use in a practical training situation.

You can find out your own learning style by completing and scoring the following questionnaire. A description of the Honey and Mumford classification follows for use after the questionnaire has been scored.

LEARNING STYLES QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is designed to find out your preferred learning style(s). Over the years you have probably developed learning 'habits' that help you benefit more from some experiences than from others. Since you are probably unaware of this, this questionnaire will help you pinpoint your learning preferences so that you are in a better position to select learning experiences that suit your style.

INSTRUCTIONS

There is no time limit for completing this questionnaire. It will probably take you 10-15 minutes. The accuracy of the results depends on how honest you can be. There are no right or wrong answers. If you agree more than you disagree with a statement put a tick by it. If you disagree more than you agree put a cross by it. Be sure to mark each item with either a tick or cross.
1. I have strong beliefs about what is right and wrong, good and bad. ✜
2. I often act without considering the possible consequences, ✝
3. I tend to solve problems using a step-by-step approach ✜
4. I believe that formal procedures and policies restrict people. ✝
5. I have a reputation for saying what I think, simply and directly. ✜
6. I often find that actions based on feelings are as sound as those based on careful thought and analysis. ✝
7. I like the sort of work where I have time for thorough preparation and implementation. ✜
8. I regularly question people about their basic assumptions. ✝
9. What matters most is whether something works in practice. ✜
10. I actively seek out new experiences. ✜
11. When I hear about a new idea or approach I immediately start working out how to apply it in practice. ✜
12. I am keen on self-discipline such as watching my diet, taking regular exercise, sticking to a fixed routine, etc. ✜
13. I take pride in doing a thorough job. ✜
14. I get on best with logical, analytical people and less well with spontaneous, 'irrational' people. ✝
15. I take care over the interpretation of data available to me and avoid jumping to conclusions. ✝
16. I like to reach a decision carefully after weighing up many alternatives. ✜
17. I'm attracted more to novel, unusual ideas than to practical ones. ✝
18. I don't like disorganised things and prefer to fit things into a coherent structure. ✜
19. I accept and stick to laid down procedures and policies so long as I regard them as an efficient way of getting the job done. ✝
20. I like to relate my actions to a general principle. ✝
21. In discussions, I like to get straight to the point. ✝
22. I tend to have distant, rather formal relationships with people at work. ✝
23. I thrive on the challenge of tackling something new and different. ✝
25. I pay meticulous attention to detail before coming to a conclusion. ✝
26. I find it difficult to produce ideas on impulse. ✝
27. I believe in coming to the point immediately. ✝
28. I am careful not to jump to conclusions too quickly. ✝
29. I prefer to have as many sources of information as possible — the more data to think over the better. ✜
30. Flippant people who don't take things seriously enough usually irritate me. ✜
31. I listen to other people's points of view before putting my own forward. ✜
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>I tend to be open about how I'm feeling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>In discussions I enjoy watching the manoeuvrings of the other participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>I prefer to respond to events on a spontaneous, flexible basis rather than plan things out in advance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>I tend to be attracted to techniques such as network analysis, flow charts, branching programmes, contingency planning, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>I tend to judge people’s ideas on their practical merits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>Quiet, thoughtful people tend to make me feel uneasy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>I often get irritated by people who want to rush things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>It is more important to enjoy the present moment than to think about the past or future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>I think that decisions based on a thorough analysis of all the information are sounder than those based on intuition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>I tend to be a perfectionist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>In discussions I usually produce lots of spontaneous ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>In meetings I put forward practical, realistic ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>More often than not, rules are there to be broken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>I prefer to stand back from a situation and consider all the perspectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>I can often see inconsistencies and weaknesses in other people’s arguments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>On balance I talk more than I listen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>I can often see better, more practical ways to get things done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>I think written reports should be short and to the point.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>I believe that rational, logical thinking should win the day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>I tend to discuss specific things with people rather than engaging in social discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>I like people who approach things realistically rather than theoretically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54.</td>
<td>In discussions I get impatient with irrelevancies and digressions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.</td>
<td>If I have a report to write I tend to produce lots of drafts before settling on the final version.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56.</td>
<td>I am keen to try things out to see if they work in practice; 0.57.1 am keen to reach answers via a logical approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58.</td>
<td>I enjoy being the one that talks a lot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59.</td>
<td>In discussions I often find I am the realist, keeping people to the point and avoiding wild speculations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60.</td>
<td>I like to ponder many alternatives before making up my mind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61.</td>
<td>In discussion with people I often find I am the most dispassionate and objective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62.</td>
<td>In discussions I'm more likely to adopt a &quot;low profile&quot; than to take the lead and do most of the talking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63.</td>
<td>I like to be able to relate current actions to a longer term bigger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64.</td>
<td>When things go wrong I am happy to shrug it off and 'put it down to experience'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65.</td>
<td>I tend to reject wild, spontaneous ideas as being impractical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66.</td>
<td>It's best to think carefully before taking action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67.</td>
<td>On balance I do the listening rather than the talking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68.</td>
<td>I tend to be tough on people who find it difficult to adopt a logical approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69.</td>
<td>Most times I believe the end justifies the means.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70.</td>
<td>I don't mind hurting people's feelings so long as the job gets done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71.</td>
<td>I find the formality of having specific objectives and plans stifling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72.</td>
<td>I'm usually one of the people who puts life into a party.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73.</td>
<td>I do whatever is expedient to get the job done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74.</td>
<td>I quickly get bored with methodical, detailed work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75.</td>
<td>I am keen on exploring the basic assumptions, principles and theories underpinning things and events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76.</td>
<td>I'm always interested to find out what people think.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77.</td>
<td>I like meetings to be run on methodical lines, sticking to a laid down agenda, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78.</td>
<td>I steer clear of subjective or ambiguous topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79.</td>
<td>I enjoy the drama and excitement of a crisis situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80.</td>
<td>People often find me insensitive to their feelings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SCORING

You score one point for each item you ticked. There are no points for items you crossed over.

Simply indicate on the lists below which items were ticked.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activist</th>
<th>Reflector</th>
<th>Theorist</th>
<th>Pragmatist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Totals**

### Learning Styles — General Descriptions

#### Activists

Activists involve themselves fully and without bias in new experiences. They enjoy the here and now and are happy to be dominated by immediate experiences. They are open-minded, not sceptical, and this tends to make them enthusiastic about anything new. Their philosophy is: 'I'll try anything once'. They tend to act first and consider the consequences afterwards. Their days are filled with activity. They tackle problems by brainstorming. As soon as the excitement from one activity has died down they are busy looking for the next. They tend to thrive on the challenge of new experiences but are bored with implementation and longer term consolidation. They are gregarious people constantly involving themselves with others but, in doing so, they seek to centre all activities around themselves.

#### Reflectors

Reflectors like to stand back and ponder experiences and observe them from many different perspectives. They collect data, both first hand and from others, and prefer to think about it thoroughly before coming to any conclusion. The thorough collection and analysis of data about experiences and events is what counts so they tend to postpone reaching definitive conclusions for as long as possible. Their philosophy is to be cautious. They are thoughtful people who like to consider all possible angles and implications before making a move. They prefer to take a back seat in meetings and discussions. They enjoy observing other people in action. They listen to others and get the drift of the discussion before making their own points. They tend to adopt a low profile and have a slightly distant, tolerant unperturbed air about them. When they act it is part of a wide picture which includes the past as well as the present and others' observations as well as their own.

#### Theorists

Theorists adapt and integrate observations into complex but logically sound theories. They think problems through in a vertical, step by step, logical way. They assimilate disparate facts into coherent theories. They tend to be
perfectionists who won't rest easy until things are tidy and fit into a rational scheme. They like to analyse and synthesise. They are keen on basic assumptions, principles, theories, models and systems thinking. Their philosophy prizes rationality and logic. If it's logical it's good. Questions they frequently ask are: 'Does it make sense?' 'How does this fit with that?' 'What are the basic assumptions?' They tend to be detached, analytical and dedicated to rational objectivity rather than anything subjective or ambiguous. Their approach to problems is consistently logical. This is their 'mental set' and they rigidly reject anything that doesn't fit with it. They prefer to maximise certainty and feel uncomfortable with subjective judgements, lateral thinking and anything flippant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pragmatists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatists are keen on trying out ideas, theories and techniques to see if they work in practice. They positively search out new ideas and take the first opportunity to experiment with applications. They are the sort of people who return from management courses brimming with new ideas that they want to try out in practice. They like to get on with things and act quickly and confidently on ideas that attract them. They tend to be impatient with ruminating and open-ended discussions. They are essentially practical, down to earth people who like making practical decisions and solving problems. They respond to problems and opportunities 'as a challenge'. Their philosophy is: There is always a better way' and 'If it works it's good'.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>