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Engagement across three social media platforms: An exploratory study of a cause-related PR campaign

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed a social media campaign promoting child welfare to explore the associations among people's social media use, their engagement with different social media platforms (blog, Facebook page, Twitter account), and three intended behavioral outcomes (social media behavior, offline communication behavior, and helping behavior). An online survey of 73 participants shows that people's use of each social media platform was significantly related to their engagement with it at a bivariate level (when the other control variables were not considered). Social media use was also related to all three behavioral outcomes. Additionally, users' engagement played a significant mediating role in the relationship between their social media use and their offline communication behavior.

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1. Introduction

For nonprofit organizations and advocates of social causes, social media promise new opportunities for mobilizing social movements and transforming inactive segments of the public into either the aware or active type of public identified by Grunig (1978). However, researchers have only begun to investigate how effectively social media can promote an organization's goals, and whether different social media platforms might do better or worse jobs of achieving them. The current study explores this issue by examining the relationships among the following variables: people's use of a cause-related campaign's three social media platforms; their engagement with each platform: and the campaign's intended behavioral outcomes. A key assumption informing this study is that campaign messages are more likely to be effective if they appear in media vehicles with which people are highly engaged. To test this assumption, we analyzed responses to a survey about a cause-related social media campaign.

The campaign was called Every Child Is Yours, and its featured cause was child welfare and advocacy. It appeared on three social media platforms: a blog, a Facebook page, and a Twitter account. Both the campaign and this study were organized with the financial support, and under the auspices of, the Children's Trust Fund of Michigan, which is the sole statewide child maltreatment prevention agency and state affiliate of the national organization Prevent Child Abuse America. The funding agency approved the study as one of a number of activities in which it would be engaged to generate public support for programs to prevent child abuse.

The campaign had two primary purposes: to mobilize and to educate. The mobilization purpose was guided by the assumption that an organization could more effectively educate a local community about a social cause by getting its

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citizens to take a related social action. The three social media platforms were therefore used to connect potential volunteers with a variety of established child- and family-related voluntary organizations, including Habitat for Humanity, Big Sisters and Big Brothers, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, and others. These organizations support the causes of child welfare and child abuse prevention to the extent that they all perform activities that are intended to reduce stress in the lives of the community's families and children.

The campaign's related educational purpose was to raise consciousness about the severe and widespread social consequences of stress experienced in childhood, and the wealth of recent research that has documented these consequences. On the same social media channels where volunteer activity was encouraged, one of the current study's authors provided a steady stream of educational material. Generated mostly by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, this material focused on the significant negative effects that childhood stress, otherwise known as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), has on adult psychological and physical health. Research on ACEs consists of more than 60 medical studies that have connected the maltreatment of children with subsequent adult emotional and physical health problems.

To establish context for the study that emerged from this campaign, the next section reviews the current state of knowledge in public relations research on the following topics: the purposes for which public relations practitioners have used social media; the need for more research specifically on the effects of social media public relations campaigns; and the role that engagement with a social media platform might play in achieving these effects. Based on the theoretical and empirical arguments developed in the literature review, two hypotheses and a research question are generated about the relations among people's use of social media platforms, their engagement with them, and the behavioral outcomes of a social media campaign.

2. Literature review

Several studies document how companies, nonprofit organizations, activists, and practitioners have been using social media for a variety of public relations purposes (e.g., Eyrich, Padman, & Sweetser, 2008; Men & Tsai, 2012; Wright & Hinson, 2012). Specifically for nonprofit organizations, these purposes include volunteer recruiting (Briones, Kuch, Liu, & Jin, 2011; Yeon, Choi, & Kiousis, 2005), fundraising (Seo, Kim, & Yang, 2009; Smitko, 2012), media relations (Reber & Kim, 2006; Waters, Tindall, & Morton, 2010), and stakeholder relationship management (Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009). Nevertheless, other studies suggest that practitioners are not taking full advantage of the interactive and dialogic capabilities afforded by new media platforms such as websites (Jun, 2011; Sommerfeldt, Kent, & Taylor, 2012), blogs (Kent, 2008; Porter, Sweetser, & Chung, 2009), Twitter (Waters & Jamal, 2011), and Facebook (Waters et al., 2009).

Notably, many of these studies focus on the production side of the social media campaign process—that is, on how practitioners and managers either perceive or use social media (Briones et al., 2011; Eyrich et al., 2008; Porter et al., 2009; Reber & Kim, 2006; Sommerfeldt et al., 2012; Waters et al., 2009; Waters & Jamal, 2011; Wright & Hinson, 2012). Research is scarce, though, on the reception side of the process concerning the extent to which cause-related public relations efforts conducted on social media actually achieve their intended goals with target publics. Sommerfeldt et al. (2012) have called for studies that could show "how web metrics and analytics can make websites more useful to activist practitioners" (p. 310). The current study is an exploratory effort to answer that call in the context of a social media advocacy campaign promoting child welfare.

In research on people's media use and their degree of participation in public life, engagement has become a key concern (Couldry, Livingstone, & Markham, 2010). When strategic communicators design and manage a social media campaign, they need to consider the extent to which users will feel engaged by the websites and other vehicles and platforms that carry it. This assumption has been widely studied in research on strategic communication (e.g., Bronner & Neijens, 2006). According to a FedEx and Ketchum study on social media use in the business world, statistics show that practitioners are also increasingly concerned about what kinds of experiences people have and how engaged they feel when they use social media. About 80% of companies surveyed claim they are currently measuring their consumers' and publics' social media use, and 84% of those have focused on engagement (FedEx/Ketchum, 2012). Nevertheless, many business leaders continue to be frustrated with the difficulty of assessing public engagement and translating it into tangible benefits for their organizations (Loechner, 2012).

According to the advertising researchers Calder, Malthouse, and Schaedel (2009), many studies of engagement neglect to define what it actually is. Either they conceive it as frequent use of a media platform (e.g., website, blog, social networking service), or they focus on the consequences of engagement rather than the nature of the phenomenon itself. To resolve this issue, Calder et al. (2009) define engagement as the *experiences* that people have in a media vehicle or platform—specifically, "a collection of experiences" that relate to "a consumer's beliefs about how a site fits into his/her life" (p. 322). They identified eight types of experience that consumers might have with advertising websites: stimulation and inspiration, social facilitation, temporal, self-esteem and civic-mindedness, intrinsic enjoyment, utilitarian, participation and socializing, and community. Of these, the four selected as most relevant to the current study's cause-related social media campaign were civic mindedness, utilitarian, social facilitation, and inspiration.

These media experiences are similar to the "gratifications" at the heart of the Uses and Gratifications (U&G) approach to media research, which assumes that peoples' various uses and experiences of media determine how much their needs or wants are gratified (for an overview, see Rubin, 2010). Relying on this approach, the current study represents an early effort

to build upon the small amount of existing literature that applies the concept of engagement to new media (see Eighmey, 1997; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000).

Although the aim of Calder et al. (2009) was to investigate how engagement could make advertising more effective, their methods and assumptions are relevant to the current study's focus on people's engagement with a cause-related social media campaign. Calder et al. first gathered measurement scales from existing literature, which have been used as indicators of engagement or online experiences; then, they sorted out the measurement scales that fit the construct and also overlap with typical U&G categories. To identify the dimensions of engagement and test the validity of the scales, they conducted a survey among 11,541 users of various media websites. Responses to these scales of engagement were used to perform a confirmatory factor analysis that could fit a measurement model for the construct (engagement) and check the validity of the scales. After constructing the dimensions of engagement, Calder et al. further tested the relationship between engagement and advertising effectiveness. They found that people's engagement with online media vehicles serves as an antecedent to advertising effectiveness, which they define according to two behavioral outcomes: an online ad is effective if people report that they had a positive attitude toward it and that they intended to click on it. The authors proposed that "highly engaged readers are more likely to be exposed to ads; ads carried by vehicles with more engaged readers will therefore be more effective; and a vehicle with highly engaged readers should command a premium price for advertising space, or at least have an advantage in retaining advertisers" (Calder et al., 2009, p. 329).

The basic assumption underlying these propositions is that campaign messages are more likely to be effective if they appear in media vehicles with which people are highly engaged. If we adapt this logic to the context of a child advocacy campaign aimed at educating people and mobilizing them to help the cause through volunteering, it could be paraphrased in the following propositions: users who are highly engaged with a social media platform are more likely to be exposed to campaign messages on it; campaign messages on social media platforms that have more engaged users will therefore be more effective; and a platform with highly engaged readers should help achieve the campaign's goals more effectively.

The current study's central concern is to determine whether people's exposure to and experiences with campaign messages on social media platforms can have varying effects on their audiences. Typically, a blog serves as an online journal in which one or more authors can write about specific topics and share relevant content from other social media sites. By contrast, Facebook and Twitter are social networking sites through which users typically send messages, connect with a variety of close and loose personal and professional ties, and share content with other users who tend to have some similarity to themselves. In a slightly different capacity as a microblogging site, Twitter also gives users opportunities to join an ongoing conversation by interacting with their "followers" and posting updates about either themselves or other shared interests, two activities that aid in building relationships. Since these platforms have different uses and characteristics, people's engagement with each of them might vary accordingly.

The more people used each of the Every Child Is Yours campaign's social media platforms, the higher their engagement was expected to be and the more likely they were expected to respond to the campaign messages. Expected behavioral outcomes included clicking "Like" on the Facebook page, communicating about the campaign with others, and ultimately volunteering for the local child welfare organizations that the campaign promoted. These expectations are built upon existing findings that Facebook use is positively associated with behaviors such as political participation (Valenzuela, Park, & Kee, 2009).

If people have different levels of engagement with social media platforms, the platforms are also likely to vary in their effectiveness. To determine the effectiveness of an advocacy campaign carried on different platforms simultaneously, the current study focused on three desired behavioral outcomes. The first, *social media behavior*, is the extent to which users actively respond to each of the three social media platforms. The second, *offline communication behavior*, is the extent to which users communicate with other people about the campaign outside the social media platform. The third, *helping behavior*, refers to whether the campaign users were mobilized to volunteer for any of the organizations featured on the blog, or to give help to abused children, or to report someone they suspected of child abuse.

Such behavioral outcomes might be brought about by users' social media engagement—conceived of as their various experiences with each platform. This expectation is echoed by Calder et al. (2009): "It is engagement with a website that causes someone to want to visit it, download its pages, be attentive to it, recommend it to a friend, or be disappointed if it were no longer available" (p. 322). Based on this reasoning, engagement might play a mediating role between use of the social media platforms and behavioral outcomes. What remains unknown, though, is the extent to which a blog, a Facebook page, and a Twitter account will play different roles in predicting engagement and the three behavioral outcomes. Given this incomplete knowledge, we propose two hypotheses and one research question.

H1. Use of the child advocacy campaign's social media platforms will be positively related to (a) engagement and the behavioral outcomes of (b) social media behavior, (c) offline communication behavior, and (d) helping behavior.

RQ1. Will the main effects predicted in H1 vary across the types of social media platform?

H2. Engagement will mediate the relationship between use of the child advocacy campaign's social media platforms and the three behavioral outcomes.

3. Method

3.1. The campaign's social media tactics and content

Between July and December 2011, a social media marketing firm was hired to develop, manage, and monitor the Every Child Is Yours campaign's social media platforms. There were three platforms: a blog, everychildisyours.org; an Every Child Is Yours Facebook page; and an EveryChildisURs Twitter account (the full name EveryChildIsYours was unavailable). On each platform, messages were disseminated to encourage volunteer activity and to inform users about recent research on the significant, negative effects that Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) have on adult psychological and physical health.

On the blog were posted a total of 39 articles. These were categorized according to the information they provided about the following topics: nine articles described the campaign itself, including its goals, contests, and surveys; seventeen summarized research on ACEs and child abuse and neglect; six announced opportunities at volunteer organizations; and seven announced ACEs-related events such as meetings and webinars. In addition, the blog hosted a personal-story contest with a prize to encourage visitors to contribute insights about how an adult's positive intervention in their life during childhood helped relieve their own Adverse Childhood Experiences.

The following tactics were used on both the Facebook page and Twitter account: developing polls, contests, and other interactive content to stimulate interaction and increase impressions; interacting with non-profits and causes that already have social media presences; encouraging individuals to post their own content, photos, and videos; and encouraging partner organizations to share and post their news, events, and photos. Three additional tactics were used on Twitter: engaging other users by following back those who followed EveryChidisURs (when appropriate); pushing out important CDC research information and links to increase follower awareness about the long-term public health problems of ACEs; and following relevant tweeters who were affiliated with local businesses, educational institutions, non-profit organizations, and entertainment outlets. A total of 37 messages with topics similar to the blog's were posted on the Facebook page, and a total of 372 tweets were posted on the Twitter account.

3.2. Study sample and procedure

During the last month of the campaign, December 2011, survey participants were recruited on each of the three social media platforms (blog, Facebook page, Twitter account). This survey was conducted during the campaign's final month to collect data about how people used and interacted with the campaign over the course of its existence. Two incentives were offered for survey participation: (1) $5 donation to a local child advocacy organization and (2) one random drawing to win a $100 gift card from a large online retailer. On the blog, the announcement was placed in the top right corner; on Facebook and Twitter, survey announcements were updated and repeatedly promoted.

Once people agreed to participate in the survey by clicking the link, they were automatically sent to the survey webpage, where they were asked about the history and extent of their social media use and their past experiences with child advocacy. Subsequent questions asked about their frequency in visiting the campaign's three social media platforms, their experiences with them, and their behavior in interacting with them. Lastly, demographic information was collected.

After a few cases were removed because they had numerous missing values or were outliers, a total of 73 surveys were usable for final analysis. Among the participants, 71% were females and 86% were whites with a mean age of 37.17 (SD = 13.93, Min = 20, Max = 68) and 14.66 years of schooling (SD = 4.19); about half were married; about half had one or more children; 43% lived in Michigan, where the campaign took place; and 16% worked at a job related to child welfare or advocacy.

3.3. Measures

The *social media use* variable was measured through questions about how often (frequency) and how long (duration) people used each of the three social media platforms. The frequency question was asked as follows: "On average, how frequently have you visited each of the Every Child Is Yours campaign's three social media platforms—blog, Facebook, and Twitter?" (5-point scale: 1—less than once a month; 2—once a month; 3—a few times a month; 4—a few times a weeks; 5—several times a day). For duration, people were asked, "On average, how much time did you spend a week on (1) blog/(2) Facebook/(3) Twitter for Every Child is Yours over the past month?" There were seven ordinal response options ranging from "less than 10 minutes" (1) to "3 hours or more" (7). Multiplying each of the frequency and duration questions created each of the social media use variables: blog use (Mean = 3.10, SD = 4.26), Facebook use (Mean = 3.56, SD = 5.09), Twitter use (Mean = 3.37, SD = 5.04).

Engagement (with the social media platform) was measured with 13 items on a five-point scale (1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree"), drawn from Calder et al. (2009) and modified to fit the current study context. Of the eight types of experience that they proposed consumers might have with advertising websites, four were chosen for the current study because they were judged to be the most relevant to a cause-related social media campaign: civic mindedness, utilitarian, social facilitation, and inspiration. Civic mindedness was measured with five items: (1) "Becoming acquainted with the campaign makes me feel like a better citizen"; (2) "Becoming acquainted with the campaign makes a difference in my life"; (3) "This site reflects my values"; (4) "It makes me more a part of my community"; and (5) "I am a better person for using

this site." Utilitarian was measured with two items: (6) "The campaign provides information that helps me make important decisions"; and (7) "I give advice and tips to people I know based on things I've read on this site". Social facilitation was measured with three items: (8) "I bring up things I have seen on this site in conversations with many other people"; (9) "This site often gives me something to talk about"; and (10) "I use things from this site in discussions or arguments with people I know." Finally, inspiration was measured with three items: (11) "It inspires me in my own life"; (12) "This site makes me think of things in new ways"; and (13) "Some stories on this site touch me deep down." Exploratory factor analysis indicated clearly one factor (based on the criterion of eigenvalue > 1.0) with 68.5% of total variance explained. Cronbach's alpha reliability was .96, indicating strong internal consistency. Accordingly, the 13 engagement items were averaged to construct one global index of user engagement (Mean = 3.52, SD = .77).

The three *behavioral outcome* variables were measured by summing the following multi-part questions (yes or no): *social media behavior*—"Have you (1) Commented on the blog? (2) Clicked the 'Like' button on the Facebook page? (3) 'Invited' your friends to the Facebook page? (4) 'Tweeted' about the issue or the campaign? [the question's broad wording was intended to include retweets]" (Mean = 1.14, SD = 1.50, alpha = .85); *offline communication behavior*—"Have you (1) Sought more information about the child abuse issue? (2) Spread the word about the website with your friends and family?" (Mean = .73, SD = .87, Interitem correlation = .62); *helping behavior*—"Have you (1) Given help to abused children? (2) Volunteered for any of the listed organizations? (3) Reported someone whom you suspect of child abuse?" (Mean = .73, SD = 1.10, alpha = .82).

3.4. Analysis

For H1 regarding the direct effects of social media use on engagement (H1a) and the three behavioral outcomes (H1b–d), four sets of hierarchical multiple regressions were performed for each of the four dependent variables. Control variables (age, gender, race, marital status, years of schooling, local residence, and job relevance) were first entered into the regression model, followed by all three of the social media use variables. Table 1 shows the results.

For RQ1 regarding differential effects of the three social media platforms, Fisher's z-transformation procedure was used (Fisher, 1915).

For H2 regarding the mediation tests, Baron and Kenny's (1986) four-step procedure calling for several regression analyses was used. The procedure's purpose is to examine statistical significance of the coefficients to discern among no, partial, or full mediation effects. Next, Sobel tests were performed to calculate and examine statistical significance of indirect effects coefficients (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004). Ultimately, the four-step procedure showed that engagement (mediator) was not significantly related to social media behavior. Accordingly, the mediation test was not performed for this dependent variable. Table 2 shows the results for the two dependent variables—offline communication behavior and helping behavior.

4. Results

H1. Direct effects of social media use on public engagement and behavioral outcomes

As indicated by the hierarchical multiple regression analyses, after participants' demographic characteristics (age, gender, race, marital status, years of schooling, local residence, and job relevance) were included in the regression models, all three of the social media uses were not significantly associated with people's engagement. These relationships were significant, though, at a bivariate level—that is, when examining only the independent and dependent variables.

For the behavioral outcomes, Facebook use was significantly correlated with social media behavior (standardized coefficient = .74, $p < .01$) and offline communication behavior (standardized coefficient = .56, $p < .01$), even after the control variables and the other two social media use variables were entered in the regression model. When the control variables alone were entered (and not the remaining two social media uses), each of the three social media uses was significantly related to all three behavioral outcomes at $p < .05$ (*beta in* Table 1). Overall, Hypothesis 1 was supported except for H1a.

RQ 1. Differential effects of the three social media uses on engagement and behavioral outcomes

Our z-tests show that there was no statistically significant difference for any of the relationships between each of the three social media platform uses and engagement and the three behavioral outcomes.

H2. Mediation tests

As shown in Table 2, the tests indicated full mediation of engagement between blog use and offline communication behavior, and between Twitter use and offline communication behavior. Full mediation was determined by the fact that in the Step 4 models, the direct effects of the independent on the dependent variable became non-significant after the mediator was included. The tests also showed partial mediation of engagement for the remaining relationships (i.e., between Facebook use and offline communication behavior, Twitter use and offline communication behavior, blog use and helping behavior, and Facebook use and helping behavior). Partial mediation was determined by the fact that, in the Step 4 models, the direct effects of the independent on the dependent variable remained significant, albeit weaker, after the mediator was included. Engagement, however, was not a significant mediator between any of the social media uses and helping behavior. Next, the Sobel tests for statistical significance indicated that the indirect effects coefficients were significant at $p < .05$, except for Twitter use as an independent variable ($z = 1.59$, $p = .056$).

Table 1
Hierarchical multiple regression results ($N = 73$).

Predictors	Engagement			Social media behavior			Offline communication behavior			Helping behavior		
	r	Beta in[a]	Beta final[b]	r	Beta in[a]	Beta final[b]	r	Beta in[a]	Beta final[b]	r	Beta in[a]	Beta final[b]
1st block: control variables												
Sex (female)	−.06		.09	−.06		.27*	.01		.18	−.33**		.03
Race (white)	−.11		−.08	−.18		−.15	−.27*		−.32*	−.36**		−.14
Age	−.26*		−.36*	−.14		.15	−.06		.05	.02		.17
Years of schooling	−.12		−.13	−.30*		−.27*	−.01		−.09	−.39***		−.12
Married	.05		.10	.07		.02	.00		.01	.33**		.16
Local residence (yes)	−.06		−.20	.29*		.35**	.37***		.44***	.04		.04
Child advocacy job (yes)	.11		−.03	.33**		−.08	.14		−.25	.62***	.36**	
ΔR^2		.16			.21*			.21*			.46***	
2nd block: social media use												
Blog use	.30*	.24	.11	.41***	.46***	−.18	.26*	.39***	−.01	.55***	.37***	.09
Facebook use	.30*	.24	.27	.56***	.61***	.74**	.37***	.46***	.56*	.57***	.40***	.35
Twitter use	.27*	.18	−.16	48***	.57***	.01	.25*	.40**	−.13	.52***	.37**	−.03
ΔR^2		.05			.27***			.15**			.12**	
Total R^2 (%)		20.5			47.8***			36.8***			57.2***	

[a] Betas are taken from the equation with the variables in the first block and without the variables in the second block.

[b] Betas are taken from the final equation with all the variables in. All Beta coefficients are standardized.

* $p \leq .05$.

** $p \leq .01$.

*** $p \leq .001$.

Table 2
Mediation tests ($N = 73$).

	Offline communication behavior	Helping behavior
IV1: Blog use		
Step 1: IV on DV	.26[*]	.55[***]
Step 2: IV on Mediator	.30[*]	.30[*]
Step 3: Mediator on DV	.38[***]	.27[*]
Step 4: IV on DV	.14	.50[***]
Sobel test (z-score)	1.85[*]	1.71[*]
IV2: Facebook use		
Step 1: IV on DV	.37[***]	.57[***]
Step 2: IV on Mediator	.30[*]	.30[*]
Step 3: Mediator on DV	.38[***]	.27[*]
Step 4: IV on DV	.27[*]	.53[***]
Sobel test (z-score)	2.07[*]	1.73[*]
IV3: Twitter use		
Step 1: IV on DV	.25[*]	.52[***]
Step 2: IV on Mediator	.27[*]	.27[*]
Step 3: Mediator on DV	.38[***]	.27[*]
Step 4: IV on DV	.14	.48[***]
Sobel tests (z-score)	1.85[*]	1.59[#]

Notes: For the mediation test, the four-step approach of Baron and Kenny (1986) was used. At step 4, mediator and IV together are regressed onto DV to see whether the effect of IV on DV is significantly reduced by controlling for the mediator. Because engagement (Mediator) was not a significant predictor of social media behavior, only two DVs (offline communication and helping behaviors) were included in this table. The significance of Sobel z-value was tested with one-tailed p values.

[*] $p \leq .05$.
[***] $p \leq .001$.
[#] $p < .10$.

5. Discussion

This study yielded two important findings. The first is that people's use of each social media platform—blog, Facebook, Twitter—was for the most part related to the campaign's behavioral goals. That is, the more people used each platform, the more they carried out the desired behaviors of clicking "Like" on a Facebook post, communicating offline with others about the campaign, and volunteering for local child welfare organizations. People's social media uses were also significantly related to social media engagement at a bivariate level. However, when the demographic, residence, and child-advocacy job experience variables were controlled, the significant relationship became nonsignificant. This result indicates that these control variables may be more important predictors of engagement than any of the social media platform uses.

The second important finding is that engagement played a mediating role between social media platform use and the campaign's behavioral goals—that is, for offline communication and helping behaviors but not social media behavior. This finding extends the relevance of the construct of engagement that Calder et al. (2009) studied in the context of online advertising to the context of a cause-related public relations campaign on social media. In the latter context, people's engagement with a social media platform consists of their experiences (i.e., civic mindedness, utilitarian, social facilitation, and inspiration) with it, as opposed to how long and frequently they use it. In addition, this finding indicates that the more people engage with a media platform that carries a campaign, the more likely they communicate about the campaign with others, for example by spreading the word about it or engaging in further conversations about it. In addition, people's frequent and extended uses of the social media platforms can directly lead to the desired outcome of getting people to volunteer. Alternatively, social media use might lead to volunteering *indirectly* through people's higher level of engagement with the platforms. But if the goal is to get people to use social media more frequently and for a longer duration with higher involvement, social media campaigners should reasonably expect that the platforms they use would need to have sufficient interactivity, user-friendly interfaces, and engaging content.

6. Limitations and future research

Because of this study's small sample size, it should be considered an exploratory examination of the associations among people's use of different social media platforms, their sense of engagement with those platforms, and the intended behavioral outcomes of a cause-related public relations campaign. In addition, the researchers did not attempt to verify the participants' actual volunteering activity. Instead, self-reported claims were relied on because this study's main purpose was to investigate the extent to which a steady flow of information on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and related issues would lead people to inquire about performing volunteer activities for the child welfare organizations that partnered with the campaign.

Further research on these matters could attempt to secure a larger sample size, use actual behavior measures, and examine different campaign or communication contexts. Nevertheless, this study is among the first to investigate important questions about how users' engagement with different types of social media might make a difference in cause-related public relations campaigners' efforts to achieve their intended behavioral outcomes. If those outcomes are educating publics about

a social cause and mobilizing them to do something to support it, cause-related public relations practitioners and researchers should make further efforts to understand the importance of users' engagement with social media, as well as to identify the conditions, content, and actions that enhance it.

Acknowledgement

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