

# How Nonprofit Organizations Use Social Media for Fundraising: A Systematic Literature Review

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## Abstract

Social media (SM) are widely used by nonprofit organizations (NPOs). However, little is known about how they are used for fundraising, especially regarding their benefits/disbenefits, and the optimum strategies for maximizing value from such campaigns. The study presented here aimed to address this gap by collecting, analyzing and synthesizing the results of the corpus of published academic research on this topic.

Of 194 potentially relevant search results generated from seven international online databases, only 71 (62 studies) fully met the inclusion criteria. Most of these qualifying studies were published in social science journals in the past three years and derived from high-income countries. Our findings indicate that the benefits NPOs can obtain from using SM for fundraising include increased *transparency and accountability*, *operational involvement and engagement*, and improved *organizational image* (although in respect of the two latter, outcomes can be mixed). The strategies for NPOs' SM use for fundraising focused either on *generic management of social media* for NPO's fundraising or on *management of some specific SM fundraising campaigns*.

**Keywords:** nonprofit, social media, fundraising, literature review

## 1. Introduction

NPOs comprise a wide variety of organizations that receive grants or philanthropic donations to provide goods and services to their clients (Chen, 2011), but without the primary goal of making a profit. The not-for-profit sector accounted for circa 5.4% of the USA's GDP with a contribution of \$905.9 billion in 2013 (McKeever, 2015).

As their business model is partly dependent on the willingness of people to donate time and money (Kenney, 2012), NPOs make a great deal of effort to reach as many potential donors as possible, and to build or strengthen relationships with them (Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009). This activity is called fundraising.

NPOs have begun to take advantage of the Internet and associated cost-effective Internet-based technologies such as SM for fundraising, initially to shift from manual to online donations that offer more efficient, quick, direct and easy money transfers (Sura, Ahn & Lee, 2017). Many NPOs also deliberately utilize blogs and SM pages as Public Relations and advocacy tools instead of having official websites (Jun, 2011). More and more NPOs today take advantage of SM to promote awareness and to seek support online through SM campaigns (Weberling, 2012), as SM allow them not only to easily and economically convey fundraising messages to the target audience, but also to collect donations, sometimes even doing both simultaneously. Indeed, fundraising via SM is one of the most rapidly growing ways NPOs use to receive funds from individuals. 71% of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in 2017 reported that they found SM beneficial for online fundraising (Global NGO Online Technology Report, 2017).

Despite this wide diffusion of SM fundraising practice, research in this area is still evolving. Although there are already some studies examining the role of SM for fundraising including, for example, how SM have affected NPOs' fundraising activities (e.g., Ma & Zhang, 2015; Saxton & Wang, 2014) or their business models (e.g.,

Chen, 2011), few practitioners have a clear understanding of “best practices” in leveraging social media for fundraising and the academic literature remains scattered across different disciplines (Goldkind, 2015). Our aim was to conduct a systematic review to analyze and synthesize what is known about the potential role of SM for fundraising. Specifically, we aimed to explore:

**RQ1:** NPOs’ benefits and disbenefits from using SM for fundraising

**RQ2:** NPOs’ strategies for fundraising via SM

The key contributions of this exploratory paper are threefold. First, to inform scholars with an interest in this topic regarding how the literature has progressed, its limitations, and possible avenues for future research. Second, from a theoretical and methodological perspective it is, to the best of our knowledge, one of the first studies to aim to categorize benefits and disbenefits from using SM for fundraising, as well as NPO’s approaches to fundraising via SM. Finally, from a practical point of view, the evidence presented in this study may be helpful to NPO leaders and managers, consultants and policymakers in developing new or effectively managing existing SM fundraising strategies.

The paper is organized as follows. The next section describes the methodology used in this research. This is followed by a description, analysis and discussion of the findings. The paper closes with a conclusion section offering some final comments and suggesting future areas of research.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Systematic Literature Review

Systematic literature review is “a review of a clearly formulated question that uses systematic and explicit methods to identify, select, and critically appraise relevant research, and to collect and analyze data from the studies that are included in the review” (The Cochrane Collaboration, 2005). First developed in medical research, this research design is considered to be evidence-based, and with high potential for practical implications (Mallett et al., 2012). As a result, it is increasingly used in other disciplines, including research into management and information systems (e.g. Tursunbayeva, Franco & Pagliari, 2017).

There are diverse approaches for conducting systematic literature reviews (e.g. Xiao & Watson, 2017; Ishakova, Hoffman & Hilbert, 2017). In this study we followed “Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses” (PRISMA) guidelines (Dekker & Bekkers, 2015; Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, & Altman, 2009) to illustrate our research roadmap and to ensure a transparent and replicable process.

### 2.2 Search Strategy and Article Screening and Selection

The search query including the keywords “Social Media”, “Nonprofit” and “Fundraising” was used to search seven international online databases (on June 9, 2018) indexing multidisciplinary (Scopus, Web of Science Core Collection, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight), social science (Proquest Social Science Database), ICT (IEEE Xplore), and health (Medline) research, with a view to taking account of the interdisciplinary nature of this topic. This search query was refined through cycles of piloting (e.g. by using “social media” and “nonprofit” keywords) to optimize its sensitivity. We also included potentially relevant studies that we came across during these previous iterations. The reference lists of articles included in the final set were searched by hand (i.e., “snowballed”) as a means of checking for additional studies that may not have been indexed in the online databases (Yeager et al., 2014). No restrictions were applied regarding the publication year, language, SM or NPO type (e.g., voluntary, charitable, nongovernmental, etc.). All outputs were stored in EPPI-Reviewer 4 software. After the initial screening of titles and abstracts, the full texts of potentially relevant articles were examined by two reviewers to assess their fit with the inclusion criteria. We included in the review only articles, book chapters or conference papers discussing the use of SM by NPOs for fundraising. Disagreements were resolved through consensus or arbitration by a third reviewer.

An email request was sent to all authors whose articles we were unable to locate. The articles of the authors who did not respond to this request were not included in this review. The details of the filters applied at each screening stage are presented in a PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1).

### 2.3 Data Extraction and Analysis

One author extracted data from the qualifying studies into a pre-developed Excel spreadsheet containing the data fields mostly present in the Appendix 1. The extracted information was then verified by all members of the research team.

To differentiate among nonprofit sectors, out of the diverse frameworks available (e.g., the six nonprofit categories of the Association of Fundraising Professionals), the categories described by GuideStar (the world’s

largest source of information for NPOs) were selected because they cover most of the NPO categories noted in the qualifying studies. The findings related to SM strategies for fundraising and to benefits were open coded (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), and grouped according to the categories that emerged from the data analysis. The income groups of countries were classified based on the classification scheme of the World Bank (2017).

Finally, following Tursunbayeva and colleagues (2017) we checked the SCImago Journal and Country Rank (SJR) for the journals in which the qualifying studies were published to identify journal subject areas and to evaluate the quality of the included studies, as SJR provides “a measure of the scientific influence of the average article in a journal that expresses how central to the global scientific discussion an average article of the journal is” (Scimagojr, 2017).

### 3. Results and Discussion

Out of 194 results returned by our search strategy, 184 titles and abstracts remained after the removal of 10 duplicates. Of these, 122 qualified for a full-text review due to their potential eligibility. A total of 71 publications (62 studies) fully met our inclusion criteria and were selected for the final analysis (see Figure 1).

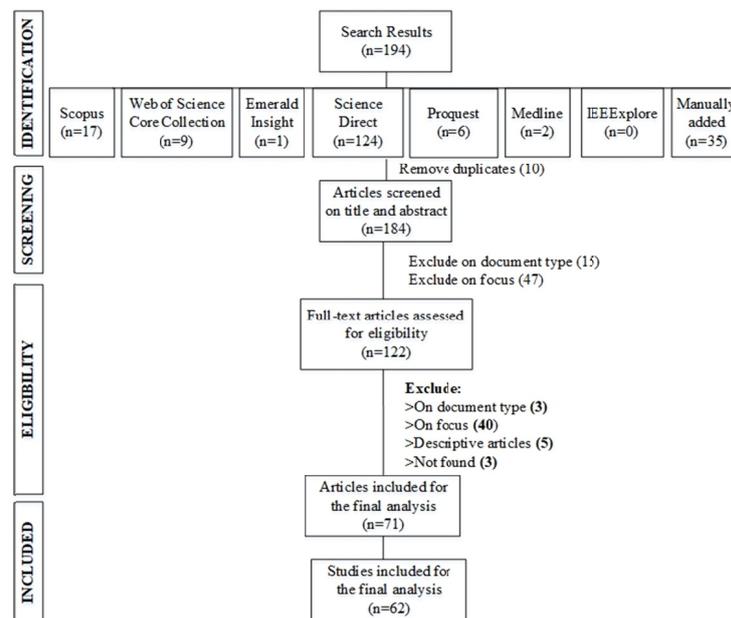


Figure 1. PRISMA flow chart

#### 3.1 Publication Year and Authors

Although social networking has been at the heart of fundraising for decades (Owen, 1964; Shapely, 2000 as cited in Lucas, 2017), (online) fundraising via SM is relatively new. The earliest qualifying study on NPOs’ SM use for fundraising was published in 2009. However, the number of studies grew rapidly between 2014 and 2016, reaching a peak in 2016, when 16 (25.8%) studies were published.

Two authors—Gregory D. Saxton from the Department of Communication at the University at Buffalo and Richard D. Waters from the School of Management at the University of San Francisco— have published the most on this topic (n=11 of 62). Five studies were authored or co-authored by Gregory D. Saxton, four by Richard D. Waters, and two by both of them together (see Appendix 1). The remaining studies were mostly conducted by different scholars.

#### 3.2 Publication Types, Subject Areas and Critical Evaluation of Studies

A total of 54 qualifying studies were published as journal articles, 12 as book chapters (10 of which we classified as one study) and five as conference papers. Journals that published the most on this topic include Public Relations Review (n=10), Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly (n=4), Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing, the International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing, and the Computers in Human Behavior (n=3).

The majority of these articles were published in multidisciplinary journals: 41 in social science journals (including

the arts and humanities; business, management and accounting; and economics, econometrics and finance), three in health journals and one in an ICT journal. Nine articles were published in multidisciplinary journals: six in social science and ICT (including engineering and computer science) journals and three in social science and health journals. Three journals that were not available on the SJR were classified manually.

Out of the 51 studies published in the journals listed in SJR, 38 articles came from journals with  $SJR < 1$ , nine from journals with  $SJR = 1-2$ , and four from journals with  $SJR > 2$  (see Appendix 1). Thus, the quality of the available evidence on this topic is low-medium, with the lowest being the International Journal of Technology, Policy and Management ( $SJR = 0.159$ ) and the highest the Journal of Public Economics ( $SJR = 3.44$ ).

### 3.3 Focus of the Studies

The research focus of the included studies is quite heterogeneous. However, in line with previous studies on SM use (Tursunbayeva et al., 2017) they could be grouped into the following macro-categories:

- Studies focusing on diverse approaches in which NPOs use SM (S1, S2, S4, S5, S7, S10, S12-S15, S17, S18, S21-S23, S25-S38, S40-S46, S48-S55, S57-S62). For example, how different NPOs (e.g., in terms of size, sector, etc.) use SM for some specific purpose (e.g., how SM is used for funding campaigns (e.g., S2)).
- Studies focusing on evaluating the impact on NPOs from SM use (S1-S4, S6, S8, S9, S11, S14, S16, S19-S21, S24, S25, S27, S31, S32, S37, S39, S45-S47, S49, S52, S58, S61). Here, for example, studies investigated how SM could potentially increase effectiveness (e.g., for signaling awareness and behavioral change (e.g., S8)) or motivation of NPOs (e.g., S32).

### 3.4 Sectors/Organizations

Most of the qualifying studies ( $n=25$ ) focused on a group of organizations belonging to the same sector. 19 qualifying studies focused on organizations belonging to several nonprofit sectors together. Among these, five studies (S16, S26, S33, S44, S46) used as a sample NPOs from the Nonprofit Times 100 list - the list of 100 largest non-educational NPOs in the USA. Seven studies focused on a single NPO. 11 studies did not specify the sector of the NPOs studied (see Appendix 1). The most commonly studied sector was health ( $n=25$ ), followed by human services ( $n=19$ ), education and research ( $n=15$ ), the arts, culture and the humanities ( $n=14$ ), the environment and animal welfare ( $n=14$ ), public and societal benefit ( $n=14$ ), international ( $n=6$ ), and religion ( $n=6$ ).

### 3.5 Geographical Distribution

A total of 48 studies were conducted in a single country: the USA ( $n=31$ ), China ( $n=5$ ), the UK ( $n=2$ ), Malaysia ( $n=2$ ), Canada, Italy, Japan, Germany, Romania, Thailand, India and Nepal (all with  $n=1$ ) (see Figure 2). Three studies were conducted in more than one country, another three were referred to as international, and the remaining eight did not specify their country of research.

The fact that most of the available evidence comes from the USA may be explained by the facts that the two authors who published the most on this topic are both from the USA, and that many healthcare organizations and universities in the USA are NPOs.

Of the aforementioned 48 studies conducted in a single country, 39 studies come from high-income countries and nine from upper-middle-income countries. Only one study comes from lower-middle-income country, and another one from low-income country.

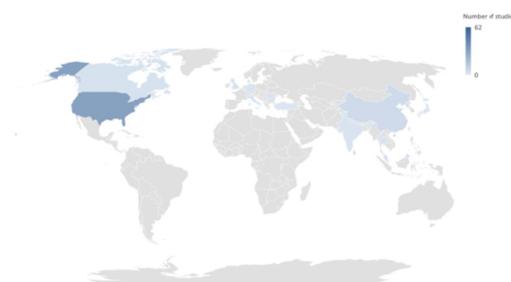


Figure 2. Geographical map of the provenance of the qualifying studies

### 3.6 Social Media Types

The types of SM studied in the qualifying studies are presented in Appendix 1 and Figure 3.

Considering that 92% of global NGOs have a Facebook page (Global NGO Online Technology Report, 2017), it is not surprising that Facebook is the most studied SM in relation to fundraising. However, since 57% of donors watch videos before giving online (UK Fundraising, 2016), we believe that the use of videos for fundraising should also be investigated more comprehensively.

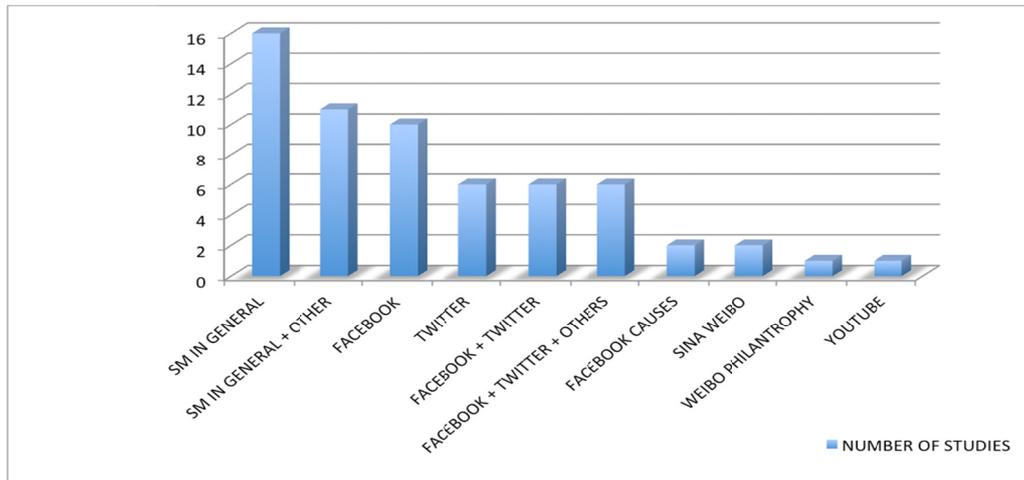


Figure 3. SM studied in the qualifying studies

### 3.7 Research Design and Theoretical Framework

A total of 32 studies employed quantitative designs, while 19 used qualitative designs. The remaining 11 were mixed-method studies. Diverse data collection methods were employed, such as surveys, interviews or the collection of publicly available SM data (e.g., Facebook posts, tweets).

Almost half of the qualifying studies (most of which were quantitative) adopted a wide variety of explanatory/interpretative theoretical frameworks. Almost all referred to different frameworks. Comparatively, the studies that adopted methodological frameworks mostly used those that had been successfully used in previous studies. The most common among these was the framework proposed by Lovejoy and Saxton (2012), which was followed by eight studies. Some studies mention that they drew on the entire corpus of literature (e.g. public relations or nonprofit). Six studies did not follow any theoretical or methodological framework (see Appendix 1).

Overall, employing diverse explanatory or methodological frameworks is not very typical for generic SM research (Pan & Crotts, 2012) or research on SM use by organizations from other sectors (e.g., public health organizations) (Tursunbayeva et al., 2017), which was found to be mostly atheoretical. As such this might illustrate the growing maturity of research on SM. However, in contrast to the studies on SM use by public health organizations, none of the studies analyzed in this review adopted any practical/guiding frameworks developed by organizations (e.g., the Public Health Agency of Canada's Determinants of Health framework adopted in the study by King et al., 2013), which might imply the absence of similar frameworks developed by NPOs.

### 3.8 NPOs' Benefits and Disbenefits from Using SM for Fundraising

Several studies acknowledged only that SM are beneficial (e.g. S4, S7, S34, S39) for NPOs' fundraising without specifying what these benefits are or how they can be achieved. Below we discuss the specific sub-categories of benefits that emerged from our analysis.

#### 3.8.1 Involvement and Engagement

Similarly to organizations from other sectors (e.g. public health), NPOs can also benefit from using SM as a powerful communication tool (S1 and S52) that can increase the involvement and engagement of donors (S2, S11, S13, S15, S50, S53), both existing and potential. The specific categories of donors mentioned in the studies were wide. Taking into account the diffusion of SM around the world these included generic wider audiences (S13, S30, S57), ordinary people including those located internationally (S2) and those that are impossible to reach through

traditional mailing campaigns (S2), as well as donors of a younger age (S13). Moreover, friends of donors were also identified as an important category of potential donors that SM can reach when existing donors share information about their donations on SM profiles (S3).

However, several studies also reported that SM do not add value to NPOs' fundraising (S25, S33, S41, S44, S55). For example, a study conducted among the 100 largest non-educational NPOs in the USA concluded that efforts to promote events among potential donors via Facebook did not generate the expected results (S44). This approach was associated with individuals being less prone to share on Facebook updates related to fundraising, event promotion and dialogue, and community-building, as opposed to informational messages.

### 3.8.2 Transparency and Accountability

SM were described as increasing the transparency of the fundraising process (S2, S4, S28 and S43), allowing the provision of detailed information regarding funding sources and amounts and the uses to which these were put (S2), with a consequent increase in donors' trust (S2 and S23). The "City of Science" museum in Italy, for example, used Twitter as an instrument of accountability during a fundraising campaign dedicated to its opening (S23).

### 3.8.3 Organizational Image

SM were also found to strengthen NPOs' reputation (S2) or brand (S24). Small NPOs in Nepal used them to address social issues and to promote projects by sharing their brand-related photographic, video and textual materials (S2). Similarly, NPOs in the USA also reported that SM helped them to simultaneously promote themselves, seek volunteers (S24) or raise money. Interestingly, it was also found that sharing information about donations made on Facebook can boost individual donors' public recognition (S27).

Nonetheless, NPOs referred to in some studies reported a relative lack of success in improving organizational image via SM (S55). A study investigating SM use among drug helpline organizations even stated that fundraising via SM was inappropriate for them (S12) because fundraising and recruiting volunteers via SM were not perceived by the study respondents as creating positive value compared to other activities such as event promotion.

Some studies also noted that the fundraising of NPOs could be criticized or even openly opposed via SM by donors who do not agree with their strategies (S2 and S31). In extreme cases, it was reported that SM can cause "catastrophic impacts" on organizational legitimacy. For example, SM users accused the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) of corruption and dishonesty after a woman whose profile on Weibo was affiliated with RCSC tweeted pictures of her Maserati cars, Hermes handbags, and enormous villa in suburban Beijing. Her tweets led to an 86.6% reduction in donations to the RCSC over the following six months and even triggered changes in the federal regulations on nonprofits (S25).

### 3.8.4 Operational

Some studies reported that SM require lower investments of resources (S2 and S29) than other fundraising channels or even reduce the overall cost of fundraising (S28). In fact, grassroots NPOs from China, which typically lack reliable funding sources to support their missions (S28), attracted the attention of many donors and created a greater social impact by using Sina Weibo. One study even predicted that "social media use may 'crowd out' more costly 'offline' fundraising activities" (Nah & Saxton, 2012, p. 306) when organizations become used to them. SM were also reported to have fewer restrictions (S2) and to grant more freedom to small NPOs to focus on the social issues that they consider important rather than those promoted by large NPOs via grant applications (S2).

### 3.8.5 Benefits and Disbenefits for NPOs fundraising by SM Type

Studies on benefits and disbenefits mostly referred to the generic term "SM" (e.g., S2, S4, and S13); thus, it was difficult to fully understand which SM platforms are more beneficial than others. Individual studies documenting low impact of specific SM for fundraising concluded that individuals are not actively encouraging their Facebook networks to participate in fundraising by sharing more information about it (S44), which could otherwise have generated new donations (S6), and that NPOs were not performing well in discussing their fundraising (as well as volunteering and advocacy) efforts via their YouTube videos (S55). Moreover, very few of the selected studies took into consideration a more recent SM such as Pinterest (S21, S59), Snapchat or Instagram (e.g. S14), although their use is constantly growing and there is already evidence from the grey literature that they can provide numerous benefits for NPOs' fundraising. For example, "Charity: Water", which aims to bring clean, safe drinking water to people in developing countries, is active on Pinterest and successfully uses it to update followers about its "Creative Fundraising" board. This NPO was rated as one of 41 great examples of Pinterest brand pages, placing it at the same level as famous brands such as Mashable, Sony Music, the Wall Street Journal, and Gap (Kallas, 2012).

### 3.9 NPOs' Strategies for Fundraising via SM

We grouped the findings related to the strategies NPOs use for fundraising via SM into two categories that emerged from our analysis: 1. Related to the generic management of SM for fundraising such as strategies regarding skills needed, type of information to upload, or stakeholders to interact with; 2. Related to the management of SM fundraising campaigns including strategies for increasing donations and building a trustful relationship with donors. Below we discuss these sub-categories in detail.

#### 3.9.1 Management of SM for NPOs' Fundraising

Several studies from this category reported that building and managing SM presence require specific *skills* (S2, S19, S30, S45, S48), although often without specifying what these are, and stated that it should be executed by a competent professional such as a community manager (S19).

Other studies recommended that NPOs should include as much information as possible on their profile pages so that potential donors can contact them or make a donation, even from their smartphones (S62). Such information includes logos, organizational descriptions, mission statements, contact information (S13), hyperlinks (S10, S13, S42, S48, S62) or QR codes (S14) to organizations' websites (such information should also be in messages/posts).

It was noted that to raise funds via SM it is important to create a dialogue and interaction not only with potential donors but also with other NPOs (S16, S29, S48). This was evidenced by NPOs that retweeted conversations (S16) or tagged other NPOs (S48) in their tweets, or by NPOs that used Facebook for similar activities (S29).

Some studies (S15 and S61) found that NPOs do not have or do not follow proper SM strategies for fundraising activities or that these are not integrated into generic organizational fundraising strategies (e.g., via other communication channels) both online and offline (S41, S50, S54, S61). For example, Goldkind (2015) stated that none of the NPO leaders whom he sampled in his study were making SM an important part of their communications and fundraising strategic plans. Nevertheless, the presence of well-defined SM strategy for fundraising was reported to increase online donations (S30).

#### 3.9.2 Management of SM Fundraising Campaigns

Some studies in this category highlighted that NPOs should create an emotional connection with donors (S37) by harmonizing their SM fundraising campaigns with the organization's voice and tone, which should be clear and consistent (S14), and enhance an image of friendliness and trustworthiness (S28 and S58) by providing narratives about their activity and human interest stories (S37). Thus, Wiencierz and colleagues (2015) found that "the more trustworthy the World Wild Foundation for Nature was perceived to be, the more the participants were willing to donate to this campaign...and the more they could envisage inviting others to support this campaign (p.112)".

Rewarding donors or giving benefits in exchange for donated money (S31 and S34) was also found to have a positive effect. For example, Milner (2012) discovered that many tweets about a social justice NPO combating suicide, self-inflicted harm, addiction and depression expressed excitement about receiving a new shirt or the launch of a new bracelet without any reference to the actual social cause.

Many of the analyzed studies reported that SM strategies that NPOs adopted in their fundraising campaigns were primarily related to "responsive" (e.g., responding to messages) rather than to "proactive" behavior (S5, S8, S10, S15-S17, S22, S26, S27, S33, S40, S44, S50, S56, S59, S60-S62). Therefore, action functions such as messages related to donation appeal, selling a product, calling for volunteers and employees, lobbying and advocacy, joining another site or voting for an organization, and learning how to help were reported to be the least used by NPOs or their donors. These findings are in line with those on SM use in organizations in other sectors (e.g., public organizations), in which SM are also often used only as an information "push" channel (Tursunbayeva et al., 2017) rather than as a two-way interaction and engagement tool.

#### 3.9.3 Strategies for Fundraising by SM Type

We did our best to synthesize fundraising strategies related to specific SM channels, although it was difficult to do so because many of the qualifying studies either focused on generic SM or drew their conclusions in relation to the generic term "SM". An exception is the study by Garczynski (2018) that provided suggestions regarding strategies non-profit libraries might adopt for each SM platform including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat, with reference, for example, to using mentions, replies and brief fundraising messages on Twitter; and to thanking donors, using visual storytelling through images, and building community through captions on Instagram. Moreover, Garczynski (2018) also makes recommendations about how to track fundraising and the most appropriate SM metrics to use in seeking to gauge the effectiveness of whatever strategies are adopted (S14).

#### 4. Conclusions, Research Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

We conducted a comprehensive systematic literature review that collected, analyzed and synthesized the corpus of published research on NPOs' SM use for fundraising.

Our findings indicate that the main benefits that NPOs can obtain from using SM for fundraising are increased *Transparency and Accountability, Operational, Involvement and Engagement*, as well as *improved Organizational Image*, although it was reported by some studies (Amtzis, 2014; Long, 2015) that the latter two can have mixed outcomes (e.g. they may not generate any result or may even have a negative impact). The strategies for NPOs' SM use for fundraising focused either on generic *management of SM for NPO's fundraising* or on *management of some specific SM fundraising campaigns* (see Table 1).

Table 1. Framework of benefits/disbenefits and strategies for fundraising via SM

Benefits and disbenefits	Strategies	
	Management of SM for NPOs' fundraising	Management of SM fundraising campaigns
– Involvement and engagement	– Need for special skills	– Fit SM fundraising into organizational tone and voice
– Transparency and accountability	– Post sufficient information	– Reward donors
– Organizational image	– Create dialogue with donors and other NPOs	– Adopt proactive behavior
– Operational	– Incorporate SM fundraising strategies into broader SM, and fundraising strategies	

Several previous authors studying NPOs and SM suggested (e.g. Waters et al., 2009; Garczynski, 2018) that NPOs should create and follow clear strategies for using each individual SM channel for fundraising, and these should also be incorporated into the organization's broader fundraising strategy (LePage, 2017), as the successful use of new technology requires an overarching plan to guide the process (Ghiz, 2010). However, as our findings were mostly related to the generic term "SM", although more than half of the qualifying studies considered diverse SM channels, we agree with the earlier observation of Goldkind (2015) that academic literature across all sectors has not yet investigated the effectiveness of SM strategies in any systematic manner. As such, more empirical studies on diverse SM are needed to provide specific evidence on their benefits and drawbacks for NPOs' fundraising activities, as well as the strategies they should adopt for each individual channel. Studies from low and medium income countries are the most needed, as they are currently nearly absent, although there is already evidence on SM use by diverse organizations in such countries (Holeman, Cookson, & Pagliari, 2016). We also invite scholars to empirically test the categories of benefits and SM fundraising strategies that emerged from our analysis, and to review their generalizability to the NPOs' use of other Internet-based technologies for fundraising. Meanwhile, we recommend that NPOs constantly revisit their strategies for using SM, taking into account also the fast-changing nature of SM (e.g. new SM channels constantly emerge, such as Snapchat, while use of others declines, as in the case of Twitter, or they even disappear - e.g. MySpace). We also recommend that NPOs carefully evaluate these strategies (possibly with the involvement of academics) with regard to their potential implications for diverse stakeholders, including such important concerns as privacy and ethics, prior to their implementation.

Most of the included studies analyzed publicly available SM data, which provide rich information regarding the extent and nature of engagement with the posts/tweets, but not internal SM data (e.g., Facebook insights, Twitter analytics and statistics on sponsored posts) that might also show correlations between post reach, engagement and targeted audience, as well as inform more proactive SM strategies. Given that these are high priorities when it comes to informing the creation of effective SM strategies and for providing a complete picture of how SM are/should be used, future studies should also consider including these internal data in their research strategies. However, we acknowledge that it is not easy to obtain such data because organizations may consider these confidential.

To conclude: this review has important implications for research, policy and practice. For scholars, its synthesis of the published academic evidence from a wide range of interdisciplinary sources offers an overview of how the literature on this topic has progressed, including its limitations, and offers suggestions for future research. It is also one of the first studies that has aimed to categorize the outcomes from using SM for fundraising, as well as NPOs' approaches to fundraising via SM, and empirical testing of these is invited. For NPO leaders and

managers, consultants and policy makers this review may help understanding of the types of benefits they can obtain from using SM. It also contains practical recommendations regarding effective strategies they could adopt, depending on their objectives, such as management of SM for NPOs' fundraising or management of specific SM fundraising campaigns. Future fundraising campaigns can also learn from the examples in this review of potential challenges or even how to avoid undesired outcomes from the use of SM for fundraising.

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#### Appendix 1. Characteristics of the included studies

#	Author(s), year (Subject area; SJR rating)	Title	Study design	SM type	Country	Organization (Sector)	Framework/s	Outcomes reported
1	Abramson, Keefe & Chou, 2015 (SS&Health; 1.997)	Communicating about cancer through Facebook: A qualitative analysis of a breast cancer awareness page	Qual.	Facebook	USA	NPO devoted to raising awareness about breast cancer (Health)	Grounded theory (MF)	Benefits
2	Amtzis, 2014 (SS; 0.194)	Crowdsourcing from the ground up: how a new generation of Nepali nonprofits uses SM to successfully promote its initiatives	Qual.	SM	Nepal	45 small NGOs (Arts; Environment)	NS	Benefits Disbenefits Generic Strategies
3	Besana & Esposito, 2014 (SS; N/A)	Economics and marketing of USA universities	Quant.	SM	USA	100 USA Universities (Education)	NS	Benefits
4	Brengarth & Mujkic, 2015 (SS&ICT; 1.555)	WEB 2.0: How SM applications leverage nonprofit responses during a wildfire crisis	Qual.	SM	USA	NS	Recurrence, repetition and forcefulness (MF)	Benefits
5	Bürger, 2015 (SS; 0.809)	Use of digital advocacy by German nonprofit foundations on Facebook	Quant.	Facebook + other SM	Germany	Sample of German foundations (Education; HS; Health; Arts; Religion; International; Environment)	Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) (MF)	Use
6	Castillo, Petrie & Wardell, 2014	Fundraising through online	Quant.	Facebook	NS	A large, nonprofit online	NS	Benefits

	(SS;3.44)	social networks: A field experiment on peer-to-peer solicitation					giving organization (NS)		
7	Clark, Maxwell & Anestaki,2016 (SS;0.367)	Bach, Beethoven, and benefactors: Facebook engagement between symphonies and their stakeholders	Quant.	Facebook	USA	US-based symphony orchestras (Arts)	Stewardship (EF/T)	Benefits	
8	Davis, Rountree & Davis,2016 (SS;0.357)	Global cause awareness: tracking awareness through electronic Word of Mouth	Qual.	SM	Internatio nal	Two global awareness events (Health)	Online word of mouth (EF/T)	Use	
9	Dumont,2013 (SS;0.585)	Transparency or accountability? The purpose of online technologies for nonprofits	Mixed Method	Facebook and Twitter	USA	10 NPOs (NS)	Transparency and accountability (EF/T)	Use	
10	Erwin & Dias,2016 (SS&Health; 0.203)	The utilization of websites for fundraising by NCI-designated cancer centers: examining the capacity for dialogic communication with prospective donors	Quant.	SM + websites	USA	68 cancer centers (Health)	Public relations (Literature or studies)	Strategies	
11	Esposito & Besana, 2018 (SS;0.357)	U.S. community foundations: building a generous society in challenging times	Quant.	SM + others	USA	Sample of 100 of the largest USA community foundations (P&S benefit)	NS	Benefits	
12	Fagerstrøm, Sørsum & Vatrapu,2014 (N/A)	Nonprofit organizations use of SM: The case of drug helplines	Mixed Method	SM	10 European countries	European Foundation of Drug Helplines (Health)	Strategy, capacity and governance (MF)	Generic Disbenefits	
13	Gao,2016 (SS;0.524)	SM as a communication strategy: content analysis of top nonprofit	Quant.	SM	China	300 NPOs (Education; HS; Health; Arts; P&S benefit)	Dialogic communicatio n, Information Diffusion	Benefits Strategies	

		foundations' micro-blogs in China					(EF/T)	
14	Garczynski,2018 (N/A)	Fundraising. How to raise money for your library using SM: Chapters 1 to 10	Qual.	Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Podcasts, SM	NS	Libraries (Education)	Media richness (EF/T)	Use Benefits Strategies
15	Goldkind,2015 (SS;0.368)	SM and social service: are nonprofits plugged in to the digital age?	Qual.	SM	USA	A sample of NPOs (HS)	Template analysis (MF)	Benefits Strategies
16	Guidry, Waters & Saxton,2014 (SS;0.529)	Moving social marketing beyond personal change to social change: strategically using Twitter to mobilize supporters into vocal advocates	Quant.	Twitter	International	50 large NPOs from the Nonprofit Times 100 and Top Nonprofits on Twitter lists (Education; HS; Health; Arts; P&S benefit; Environment)	Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) (MF)	Strategies
17	Guo & Saxton,2014 (SS;1.202)	Tweeting social change: How SM are changing nonprofit advocacy	Mixed Method	Facebook, Twitter + other SM	USA	188 civil rights and advocacy organizations (P&S benefit)	Nonprofit, Public relations (Literature or studies)	Use
18	Gurman & Ellenberger, 2015 (SS&Health; 0.997)	Reaching the global community during disasters: Findings from a content analysis of the organizational use of Twitter after the 2010 Haiti Earthquake	Quant.	Twitter	USA	The American Red Cross, Partners in Health, Yele Haiti, Oxfam America, UNICEF, the World Food Program (Health, HS)	Three types of organizations may use to cultivate relations through social media and the Internet (MF)	Use
19	Hansen, Koepfler, Jaeger, Bertot & Viselli,2014 (N/A)	Civic action brokering platforms: Facilitating local engagement with ACTION Alexandria	Mixed Method	SM + other	USA	130 registered NPOs or government agencies (P&S benefit)	Civic action brokering (EF/T)	Strategies
20	Henry & Bosman,2014 (SS;N/A)	Strategic management and SM: An	Quant.	Facebook Causes	USA and Canada	180 NPOs (Health; Environment)	Social capital (EF/T)	Strategies

			empirical analysis of electronic social capital and online fundraising						
21	Hou & Lampe,2015 (N/A)	SM effectiveness for public engagement: Examples of small nonprofits	Mixed Method	Facebook, Twitter + other SM	USA	26 small environmental NPOs (Environment)	Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) (MF)	Disbenefits Strategies	
22	Kirk, Ractham & Abrahams,2016 (SS;0.367)	Website development by nonprofit organizations in an emerging market: a case study of Thai websites	Quant.	SM + websites	Thailand	284 NPOs (websites) (Education; HS; Health; Arts; P&S benefit; Environment)	Electronic business stage model (EF)	Use	
23	Lazzeretti, Sartori & Innocenti,2015 (SS;0.191)	Museums and SM: the case of the Museum of Natural History of Florence	Qual.	SM	Italy	The Museum of Natural History of Florence (Arts)	Marketing, Museology (Literature or studies)	Benefits	
24	Liu,2012 (SS;0.625)	Toward a better understanding of nonprofit communication management	Qual.	SM + media	USA	NS	Environmental factors affecting communication practices (MF)	Benefits	
25	Long,2015 (SS;0.809)	Managing legitimacy crisis for state-owned non-profit organization: A case study of the Red Cross Society of China	Qual.	SM + websites + media	China	The Red Cross Society of China (Health)	Institutional (EF/T)	Generic Disbenefits	
26	Lovejoy & Saxton,2012 (ICT;2.961)	Information, community, and action: how nonprofit organizations use SM	Mixed Method	Twitter	USA	100 largest non-educational USA NPOs in terms of revenue (Education; HS; Health; P&S benefit; Arts; Environment; International)	Engagement, New Media, Individual-level SM coding and blog classification studies (Literature or studies)	Use	
27	Lucas, 2017 (SS;0.367)	Reinventing the rattling tin: How UK charities use Facebook in fundraising	Mixed Method	Facebook	UK	The three biggest UK cancer charities by donations (Health)	Studies on social media use, social capital, online collective action and	Benefits Use	

28	Ma & Zhang,2015 (N/A)	Microblogging (weibo) and environmental nonprofit organizations in China: The case of urban air pollution monitoring campaign	Qual.	Sina Weibo	China	Environmental NPOs (Environment)	persuasion (MF) Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) (MF)	Benefits Strategies Use
29	Maiorescu,2015 (SS;0.809)	Public relations for the bereaved: online interactions in a community for stillbirth and neonatal death charity	Quant.	Facebook	UK	Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society (Health)	Interpersonal communication (EF/T)	Benefits Strategies
30	McMillan-Cottom ,2014 (Health;0.664)	Mitigating concerns and maximizing returns: SM strategies for injury prevention non-profits	Qual.	Facebook and Twitter	USA	27 NPOs (Health; HS)	NS	Benefits Strategies
31	Milner,2012 (SS;0.378)	To Write Love through the indie imaginary: The narrative argument of a mediated movement	Qual.	SM website	USA	A social justice nonprofit (Health)	Indie Values (EF/T)	Generic Disbenefits Strategies
32	Muralidharan, Rasmussen, Patterson & Shin,2011 (SS;0.809)	Hope for Haiti: an analysis of Facebook and Twitter usage during the earthquake relief efforts	Quant.	Facebook and Twitter	USA	41 NPOs (obtained from The Chronicle of Philanthropy web site) and 8 media organizations (NS)	Framing (EF/T)	Use
33	Nah & Saxton,2012 (SS;2.262)	Modeling the adoption and use of SM by nonprofit organizations	Quant.	Facebook and Twitter	USA	100 large USA NPOs (Arts; HS; Health)	Strategy, capacity, governance and environment (MF)	Generic Benefits Disbenefits
34	Nee,2013 (SS;0.682)	Creative destruction: an exploratory study of how digitally native news nonprofits	Qual.	SM website	USA	A consortium of nonprofit news outlets (Education)	Management theories (EF)	Benefits Strategies

		are innovating online journalism practices						
35	Nolan,2015 (SS;0.809)	The impact of executive personal branding on non-profit perception and communications	Quant.	Twitter	USA	Seven executives representing popular NPOs in the USA (HS)	Face (EF/T)	Strategies
36	Okada, Ishida & Yamauchi, 2017 (SS, N/A)	Effectiveness of SM in disaster fundraising: Mobilizing the public towards voluntary actions	Quant.	Facebook and Twitter	Japan	143 organizations participating in Japan Civil Network for Disaster Relief in the East Japan (NS)	NS	Use Strategies
37	Pressrove & Pardun,2016 (SS;0.256)	Relationship between personal technology use and the donor/volunteer : a parasocial approach	Quant.	SM	USA	660 nonprofit stakeholders (a representative group of local United Ways) (NS)	Parasocial interaction (EF/T)	Strategies
38	Raja-Yusof, Norman, Abdul-Rahman, Nazri & Mohd-Yusoff,2016 (SS&ICT;1.555)	Cyber-volunteering: SM affordances in fulfilling NGO social missions	Qual.	SM	Malaysia	7 selected Islamic NGOs (Education)	Affordance (EF/T)	Use
39	Raman,2016 (SS&ICT;0.413)	How do SM, mobility, analytics and cloud computing impact nonprofit organizations? A pluralistic study of information and communication technologies in Indian context	Mixed Method	SM + others	India	111 NPO participants (NS)	Unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (EF)	Benefits
40	Ramanadhan, Mendez, Rao & Viswanath,2013 (Health;1.337)	SM use by community-based organizations conducting health promotion: a content analysis	Quant.	Facebook, Twitter, YouTube	USA	166 community-based organizations (Health)	NS	Use
41	Reddick & Ponomariov,2012	The effect of individuals'	Quant.	SM + others	USA	NS	Social capital (EF/T)	Generic Disbenefits

	(SS;1,202)	organization affiliation on their Internet donations							Strategies
42	Rodriguez,2016 (SS;0.809)	Communicating global inequalities: How LGBTI asylum-specific NGOs use SM as public relations	Qual.	Facebook and Twitter	USA	5 LGBTI NGOs (HS)	Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) (MF)		Strategies
43	Saxton & Zhuang,2013 (SS;0.587)	A game-theoretic model of disclosure-donation interactions in the market for charitable contributions	Quant.	SM + others	NS	NS	Game (EF/T)		Benefits
44	Saxton & Waters,2014 (SS;2.313)	What do stakeholders like on Facebook? Examining public reactions to nonprofit organizations' informational, promotional, and community-building messages	Quant.	Facebook	USA	100 largest NPOs from the Nonprofit Times 100 list (HS; Health; Arts; P&S benefit; Environment; International)	Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) (MF)		Generic Disbenefits Use
45	Saxton & Wang,2014 (SS;1.202)	The social network effect: the determinants of giving through SM	Quant.	Facebook Causes	USA	68 NPOs (HS; Health; Arts)			Strategies
46	Shin & Chen,2016 (SS&ICT;0.159)	An exploratory study of nonprofit organisations' use of the internet for communications and fundraising	Quant.	SM	USA	50 NPOs from the top 100 NPOs (The Nonprofit Times, 2013) (Education; HS; Health; Arts; P&S benefit; Religion)	Economic model of giving (EF/T) Six websites practices (or characteristics) (MF)		Strategies
47	Sisson,2016 (SS;0.809)	Control mutuality, SM, and organization-public relationships: A study of local animal welfare	Mixed Method	SM	NS	5 nonprofit animal welfare organizations (Environment)	Scales on trust, commitment, control mutuality and satisfaction as well as social media		Benefits

48	Smitko,2012 (SS;0.809)	organizations' donors Donor engagement through Twitter	Qual.	Twitter	Canada	2 NPOs+one for-profit Twitter site (HS; P&S benefit)	engagement (MF) Social judgment and social networking theories (EF)	Strategies
49	Sura, Ahn & Lee, 2017 (SS&ICT; 1.299)	Factors influencing intention to donate via social network site (SNS): From Asian's perspective	Quant.	SM	Asian countries	Charity organizations (P&S benefit)	Treiblmaier and Pollach (2006) model considering Theory of Planned Behavior (MF/T)	Benefits Use
50	Svensson, Mahoney & Hambrick,2015 (SS;1.202)	Twitter as a communication tool for nonprofits: A study of sport-for-development organizations	Quant.	Twitter	International	74 NPOs (46 organizational Twitter accounts) (Health; Environment; HS)	Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) (MF)	Benefits Strategies
51	Tan, Lu & Tan, 2016 (N/A)	An examination of social comparison triggered by higher donation visibility over social media platforms	Quant.	Weibo Philanthropy	China	NS	NS	Strategies
52	Turner & Mattson,2015 (N/A)	Friend raising: How the united way of chester county uses SM to drive change	Qual.	SM	USA	United Way of Chester County (P&S benefit)	Benefits of SM, barriers to use and SM impact (EF/T)	Benefits
53	Warren, Sulaiman & Jaafar, 2014 (SS&ICT;1.555)	Facebook: The enabler of online civic engagement for activists	Qual.	Facebook	Malaysia	NS	Denning's (2000) five modes of Internet activism (MF)	Use
54	Waters et al.,2009 (SS;0.809)	Engaging stakeholders through social networking: How nonprofit organizations are using Facebook	Quant.	Facebook	USA	275 randomly sampled legally incorporated NPOs' profiles (Education; HS; Health; Arts; P&S benefit; Religion)	Strategic virtual communication strategies (EF/T)	Strategies
55	Waters & Jones,2011 (SS;0.357)	Using video to build an organization's identity and brand: A content	Quant.	YouTube	NS	100 most viewed official NPO YouTube channels (Education; HS;	Organizational identity (EF/T)	Generic Disbenefits

		analysis of nonprofit organizations' YouTube videos				Health; Arts; P&S benefit; Religion)		
56	Waters & Lo,2012 (SS;0.276)	Exploring the impact of culture in the SM sphere: A content analysis of nonprofit organizations' use of Facebook	Quant.	Facebook	China, Turkey and the USA	225 NPOs (75 from China, 75 from Turkey, and 75 from the USA) (Education; HS; Health; Arts; P&S benefit; Religion)	SM disclosure, organizational achievement, and stakeholder engagement (MF)	Use
57	Waters, Amarkhil & Mathisen, 2012 (SS;0.809)	Messaging, music, and mailbags: How technical design and entertainment boost the performance of environmental organizations' podcasts	Quant.	Podcast	NS	Environmental organizations (Environment)	The theory of entertainment persuasion and the PodCred framework (Literature or studies)	Use
58	Wiencierz, Pöppel & Röttger,2015 (SS;0.524)	Where does my money go? How online comments on a donation campaign influence the perceived trustworthiness of a nonprofit organization	Quant.	Facebook	NS	World Wide Fund for Nature and a fictitious animal welfare and conservation organization (Environment)	Reputational dimensions (EF/T; MF)	Strategies
59	Wong et al.,2016 (Health;0.737*)	How U.S. children's hospitals use SM: A mixed methods study	Mixed Method	Facebook, Twitter + other SM	USA	45 freestanding USA children's hospitals (Health)	NS	Use
60	Young,2016 (SS;0.368)	Facebook, Twitter, and Blogs: The adoption and utilization of SM in nonprofit human service organizations	Quant.	Facebook, Twitter + other SM	USA	125 NPOs (HS)	Diffusion of innovations, media ecology and organizational identity (EF/T)	Use
61	Zbucea, Roman & Stefanica,2013 (N/A)	How efficient is the use of social networks for Romanian NGO's?	Qual.	SM	Romania	25 of the most popular Romanian NGOs on Facebook (HS; Environment)	NS	Strategies
62	Zhou & Pan,2016	Information,	Mixed	Sina	China	55 rural	Lovejoy and	Strategies

(SS;0.572)	community, and action on Sina-Weibo: How chinese philanthropic NGOs use SM	Method	Weibo	education NGOs (Education)	Saxton (2012) (MF)	Use
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SS=Social Sciences; N/A=Not available; NS=Not specified; Qual.=qualitative; Quant.=quantitative; Social Media=SM; Education=education and research; HS=human services; Arts=the arts, culture and the humanities; P&S benefit=public and societal benefit; Environment=the environment and animal welfare; EF/T=Explanatory framework/Theories; MF=Methodological frameworks.

\* 2016 SJR rating.

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