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**Non-profit organisations and stakeholder relationships:
Assessing digital communication through public relations
theory**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

This research examines New Zealand non-profit organisations' (NPOs) use of digital communication channels to assess if digital channels are being used effectively for stakeholder engagement.

Qualitative interviews with 20 communication practitioners examined whether/how the NPOs are using multiple digital channels and identified the five most popular digital channels. The interview data was analysed using *HyperRESEARCH* and the five most popular channels identified overall were websites, e-newsletters, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Although the participating NPOs are all using multiple digital channels, the communication practitioners could not confidently say the channels achieve the organisation's goals, or assist with stakeholder engagement and participation. To help assess if the channels are being used strategically and are achieving the organisations' purposes, a quantitative content analysis of the most popular digital channels of five NPOs was undertaken. The channels' content was also assessed to identify if the communication practitioners are using public relations theories for dialogic communication, relationship management and stakeholder engagement.

Results of the interviews and the content analysis reveal that NPOs are not using their channels strategically, and are not always achieving their desired purpose. The communication approach by the NPOs is scattershot and ad hoc, and evaluation of the communication is limited. To assist NPOs to improve their use of digital channels to build effective stakeholder relationships, recommendations include using public relations theories, building a digital communication strategy, making differentiated use of individual channels – rather than using a one-size-fits all approach – and ensuring evaluation of the digital communication to maintain best practice. This should provide NPOs with evidence of improved stakeholder engagement and relationships.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Digital technology has become increasingly important as a platform for organisations to communicate and engage with stakeholders: it increases audience reach and provides opportunities for two-way communication that can, additionally, be measured. Digital channels have been posited as an ideal low-cost alternative to traditional print communication, which is particularly important within the non-profit sector, as non-profit organisations (NPOs) are often challenged by constant limitations of resources and time (Briones, Kuch, Liu, & Jin, 2010; Gray, Hopkins, & Kirkwood, 2015; Wells, 2012). Non-profit organisations exist to serve a purpose within their communities and they are largely reliant on stakeholders to promote their services and provide that much-needed support. Wells (2012) notes the non-profit sector ranges vastly in size and scope, encompasses many dichotomies including national or international scope, and charitable or non-charitable orientation, and can include human or non-human focused organisations. Wells (2012) also states “the strategy, objectives and behaviour of NPOs are multifaceted and fluid as they respond to social, economic and political change in an attempt to remain relevant and functional” (p. 86). Despite the size and typology differences, cultivating stakeholder, volunteer and donor relationships is crucial for all NPOs to meet their objectives, as these stakeholders contribute funds and support to enable the NPOs to achieve their outcomes. Therefore, it is vital that NPOs are equipped with the knowledge of how to adapt their communication across a variety of channels or platforms. If NPOs can utilise digital channels effectively, they will have a better chance of meeting their communicative needs to engage and build stakeholder relationships.

This research will investigate the connections between digital communication technologies, the New Zealand non-profit sector, and NPOs’ present and/or potential stakeholders, in terms of cultivating and maintaining relationships online. This study will explore the communication efforts across a range of platforms and channels undertaken by a sample group of New Zealand NPOs, and will

identify the channels that are the most popular among New Zealand NPOs. Further, exploring the NPOs' organisational communication and assessing how they align their goals with their actual digital technological practice will help determine to what degree New Zealand NPOs are successfully achieving their communication goals through their current delivery. Finally, analysing NPOs' digital communication practice and mapping it against stakeholder engagement and dialogic communication theory to see whether and how current practice actually aligns with public relations theories — or diverges from them — will provide valuable insight into the potential usefulness of theory in helping New Zealand NPOs better achieve their strategic communicative outcomes online.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Technology has provided a proliferation of interactive digital channels for NPOs to use to communicate with their key stakeholders. Studies indicate most organisations within the non-profit sector are now taking advantage of one or more of these communication tools to meet a variety of public relations objectives (Briones et al., 2010; Paek, Hove, Jung, & Cole, 2013; Schoenmaker, 2014; Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009; Wright & Hinson, 2013). Nevertheless, recent research suggests NPOs are still not utilising digital channels for the full dialogic communicative attributes that they are capable of, particularly in terms of managing relationships and promoting stakeholder engagement (Bruning, Dials, & Shirka, 2008; Waters & Bortree, 2012).

Given that relationship is fundamental to achieving the non-profit mission, any examination of how digital technologies can best serve the non-profit sector should consider if and/or how they have been used to improve communication, or can be better used to improve stakeholder and public relationships. This review will examine existing research on digital communication and its usage by NPOs, to contextualise how public relations theories may relate to digital communication strategies. The purpose is to explore research that has taken place on NPOs internationally and in New Zealand, to assess how the non-profit sector uses digital channels. As part of this analysis, the scholarly literature has also been reviewed to assess if public relations theories of relationship management, dialogism, and stakeholder engagement have been applied to NPOs in terms of their digital communication strategy.

Broadly, the literature shows NPOs and practitioners are actively adapting their communication outputs to include digital channels. However, existing studies do not show whether NPOs have considered how to best use multiple or converged digital channels to achieve a strategic purpose of

stakeholder engagement and relationship management. Gaps have been noted in studies conducted both internationally and in New Zealand, particularly regarding investigation of the multiple digital channels NPOs engage to communicate with stakeholders.

2.2 Communication Models - Public Relations Theories

2.2.1 Dialogic communication theory

Dialogic theory has been posited as an essential framework that organisations can apply to any strategic communication to maintain ethical public relations best practice (Bortree & Seltzer 2009; Kent & Taylor, 1998; Taylor & Kent, 2014). Taylor and Kent (2014) state “Dialogic engagement should take place because it enables organizations and stakeholders to interact, fostering understanding, goodwill, and a shared view of reality” (p. 391). The same dialogic principles are arguably an essential element NPOs can use to produce an authentic voice and build relationships online. Kent and Taylor (1998, 2002) were the first scholars to apply the principles of dialogic communication to assess relationship management in public relations practice across the World Wide Web. Kent and Taylor (1998) explain the conceptualisation of dialogue offers an opportunity for organisations to maintain an ethical balance, as “communication should not be a means to an end, but ...communication should be an end in itself” (p. 324). The Internet can provide a greater capacity for two-way communication to reach more stakeholders than ever before through a dialogic loop, which Kent and Taylor (1998) define as a “feedback loop” principle, allowing an organisation to answer questions and engage with its stakeholders (p. 326). An organisation that shows a willingness to both provide and receive feedback through dialogic communication will prove to its stakeholders that it is motivated and open to address issues and concerns.

The other principles that Kent and Taylor (1998) identify to promote dialogic communication through the Web are “usefulness of information, generation of return visits, intuitiveness and ease of interface, and conservation of visitors” (pp. 327-331). Kent and Taylor (2002) go on to refine the concept of dialogism, pointing out “Dialogue is not a process or a series of steps. Rather, it is a product of on-going communication and relationships” (p. 24). Dialogic communication is proactive rather than a reactive process (Kent & Taylor, 2002). Although online communication can be used for one-way dissemination of information, digital channels arguably provide an ideal environment where dialogic communication can promote positive interactions, and ensure NPOs are accessible and responsive to stakeholders through a communicative exchange of information (Grunig, 2009, Kent & Taylor, 2002). Kent and Taylor (2002) acknowledge “Dialogue involves work and involves risk; however, dialogue can lead to greater organizational rewards in the form of increased public support, and enhanced image/reputation” (p. 30). The concept of dialogic communication should be considered as an essential element for an organisation’s public relations strategy if its objective is to engage with stakeholders (Taylor & Kent, 2014).

Researchers have reached a consensus that many NPOs appear (to date) to apply a cursory approach to their digital communication, and are not yet utilising dialogic principles that could give them greater gains in communication and relationship building (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Briones et al., 2010; Kim, Chun, Kwak, & Nam, 2014). Bortree and Seltzer’s (2009) purposive study examined the online presence of 50 advocacy groups by assessing their Facebook profiles against dialogic theory and measuring the outcomes. The authors argue dialogic principles are highly applicable to a digital communication framework, which includes diverse channels and their unique attributes for dialogism. Bortree and Seltzer (2009) also suggest that opportunities exist for further dialogic studies of online channels “to examine whether dialogic strategy use is successful in generating actual dialogic communication” (p. 319).

More recently studies have assessed whether NPOs are applying dialogic communication theories to digital channels to build or maintain stakeholder relationships. Cho and De Moya's (2014) study explored how two international NPOs initiated communication and applied dialogic theories across their digital channels to engage with their stakeholders. Specifically, the researchers sought to break down the messages into five key motivations to understand exactly how and why NPOs should use digital communication proactively, with public relations dialogic theories in mind, to build and/or maintain relationships. Cho and De Moya's (2014) findings reveal that whatever NPOs themselves may have previously thought, the stakeholders involved in this research do value the dialogic interaction if/when it is offered as part of online communication. However, these findings are challenged by Borst (2014) whose research assessed NPOs' use of Twitter to build relationships through dialogic communication. Borst (2014) suggests that his study does not show a direct correlation between an NPO's digital communication strategies on Twitter and its relationship with volunteers. The concluding recommendation is for further research to explore NPOs' online communication and the specific desired approach for each particular channel, to establish how digital communication use affects relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders.

2.2.2 Relationship management theory

Relationship management theory provides a framework for practitioners from NPOs to achieve better relational outcomes with their stakeholders. Ledingham (2003) describes how a relational approach was first introduced to public relations scholarship by Ferguson (1984), who asserted all organisations need to focus on relationships, rather than concentrating their efforts on simply communicating to meet their own organisational goals. Ledingham and Bruning (1998) incorporated this relational approach in their study, which culminated in a survey of public relations practitioners to explore which marketing and social psychology dimensions have a role in communication to assist with relationship management. Beginning with a comprehensive list developed through existing research, Ledingham and Bruning (1998) were able to identify the relationship dimensions that

would potentially be of greatest value for organisational relationships. In-depth interviews with public relations practitioners were then combined with participation from focus groups and further discussion with subscribers at telecommunications services to provide substantive results. The findings defined the key dimensions that could improve relational outcomes as trust, commitment, openness, investment, and involvement. Ledingham and Bruning (1998) assert that organisations need to make the shift to think of public relations as relationship management, and to use the relationship dimensions as a framework to develop future communication activities.

Following Ledingham and Bruning's (1998) relationship management framework, Hon and Grunig (1999) extended the theoretical perspective, proposing organisations could further enhance their organisation/stakeholder relationships by focusing and applying six relationship elements to their strategic communication, which would enable practitioners to measure the success of communication through the relational outcomes. Hon and Grunig (1999) defined these relationship elements as control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, commitment, exchange relationship, and communal relationship.

The six elements and proposed relational outcomes are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Hon and Grunig's (1999) six relationship elements and relational outcomes

Element	Relational Outcomes
Control mutuality	Mutual understanding of the balance of power and influence held by each party.
Trust	Willingness and confidence to openly participate with each other by achieving three key dimensions: integrity, dependability and competence.
Satisfaction	Positivity and favourability are established through the party's interactions leading to reinforced relationships.
Commitment	Relationship worth is proven, so both parties are motivated to maintain and promote each other - includes two key dimensions: continuance commitment and/or action commitment.
Exchange relationship	Relationships are formed where 'give and take' actions take place, with understanding that while one may benefit in one instance, it will be reciprocated in kind.
Communal relationship	Each party is invested enough in the relationship to the point they care and will contribute to each other to assist in its ongoing success.

Another relationship management framework that has formed the basis for extensive public relations research since its inception is the excellence theory framework. Scholarly research has asserted that the excellence theory is still relevant to new technological public relations tools and channels (Barrett, 2001; Haigh, Brubaker, & Whiteside, 2013; Ledingham, 2003; Waters, 2008). An article on organisational listening and relationships by Brunner (2008) noted Grunig and Huang (2000) successfully narrowed their focus to four of the excellence theory elements, stating the most important theoretical components that affect relational outcomes are control mutuality, trust, relational satisfaction and relational commitment. Accordingly, public relations scholars have attested that the excellence typology is a framework that can benefit the non-profit sector, enabling them to build and maintain effective relationships with stakeholders (Park & Rhee, 2010; Ruggiano, Taliaferro, Dillon, Granger, & Scher, 2015). Interestingly, Bruning, Dials, and Shirka (2008) have suggested that one of the notable pitfalls for NPOs is that all "too often relationship building activity has adopted a 'one size fits all' strategy" (p. 29). However, a single approach to a communication

strategy is not ideal. Stakeholder relationships are often fluid and require constant measurement to ensure NPOs' tailored communication strategies are reaching stakeholders (Ledingham, 2003).

The literature suggests NPOs will have a greater chance of achieving their strategic communicative goals if they align their communication efforts with relationship management techniques, while ensuring that they include dialogic principles. Bruning et al.'s (2008) results matrix suggests that if dialogic exchange takes place, NPOs and their stakeholders will form equally beneficial relationships with each other. Waters (2008) has identified similar findings through his study, which assessed the relationship management of NPOs with 120 donors and determines that applying Hon and Grunig's organisation-public relationship elements will assist donors to feel more valued, engaged and connected to a NPO. These articles argue dialogic theory and relationship management theories go hand-in-hand within the public relations communicative context. Furthermore, this position is reinforced by Ki and Hon (2009), who define studies of organisation and specific stakeholder relationships, and note they should include: "(a) antecedents of relationships, (b) relationship management strategies, and (c) relationship quality outcomes" (p. 1). Each of these stages is essential to develop an understanding of the audiences that NPOs wish to communicate with, of the strategies required to reach those key stakeholders, and of ways of assessing whether the communication strategy is effectively reaching that target group. Saxton and Waters (2014) have similarly asserted the importance of theoretical public relations strategies for NPOs to build relationships, and of the on-going need to research both measurement strategies and stakeholder response to online communication initiatives.

2.2.3 Stakeholder engagement theory

Stakeholder relationships are vital to the success of all NPOs, as stakeholders can potentially affect, and/or be directly be affected by, an NPO's objectives (Freeman & Reed, 1983). Stakeholder engagement is defined as the practice of positive interactions to build a relationship, which is best achieved if it is based on trust, respect, and open exchange of information between an organisation

and its stakeholders (Grunig, 2009). Hon and Grunig (1999) also propose these same strategic variables are an ideal foundation for measuring relationships. Another driver of positive stakeholder engagement is ethical communication, maintaining a careful balance between what an organisation wants from its stakeholders strategically, with a responsibility to ensure that the relationship is mutually fair and not misused or misrepresented. Nurturing and maintaining stakeholder relationships requires careful consideration to ensure NPOs are facilitating effective and ethical ongoing communication (Haigh et al., 2013). If this balance of efficacy and ethics is achieved, stakeholders will be more likely to collaborate and communicate with NPOs and positive lasting relationships will be formed. Communication that includes two-way communication transcends traditional one-way communication because it encourages dialogue and improved organisation/stakeholder relationships (Maxwell & Carboni, 2014). Saxton and Waters (2014) note “Practitioners can achieve significant levels of interaction and engagement with stakeholders if strategic choices are made to demonstrate commitment to stakeholders” (p. 283). Stakeholder engagement provides a conceptual foundation of *what* an organisation can do to build and maintain positive relationships with its stakeholders. Adding public relations theories to the stakeholder engagement premise will provide a path that describes exactly *how* a NPO can encourage and achieve this goal.

The diffusion of digital communication channels provides greater opportunities for NPOs to engage with and be more responsive to stakeholders, in real-time, through ongoing dialogue. Saxton and Waters’ (2014) study of digital channel use by NPOs confirms that dialogue and interactivity through online platforms are valued by the non-profit sector and its stakeholders/publics, because communication in real-time leads to increased engagement, opportunities for immediate interaction, and better overall outcomes. Carboni and Maxwell (2015) conducted studies to assess how NPOs use social media channels for stakeholder engagement. The scholars reiterate that two-way communication and engagement via digital media will assist NPOs to achieve their goals, increasing stakeholder/organisation interaction over a much broader context and in shorter

timeframes than they would otherwise achieve. However, the information and channels need to be carefully chosen to ensure the right audience is being reached and that the purpose of the communication is clear. Furthermore, Carboni and Maxwell (2015) state that if stakeholders are engaged with an organisation through online platforms, they are more likely to engage offline as well, which will improve overall relationships. However, Carboni and Maxwell (2015) do acknowledge that most NPOs involved in their research appear to apply a scattershot approach, and use digital channels without fully understanding how to best engage stakeholders online.

The literature to date suggests that NPOs need to develop a greater understanding of the digital channels that are available, and the stakeholders that they wish to engage with, so that the channels are fit for purpose, and reach the right segmented audience. The communicative actions of NPOs across digital channels need to be studied, to evaluate the reactions of stakeholders and/or their engagement uptake, and to assess if public relations theories have been applied (Haigh et al., 2013; Saxton & Waters, 2014). For strategic communication to be truly effective, a comparative study of interactions and the attributes and opportunities of the technology being used should also be measured by deploying analytics, and assessing engagement online, post response, and/or feedback received. Assessing the content of various digital channels and audience engagement will provide evidence to help ascertain if strategic online communication by NPOs is more effective than online communication that is applied ad hoc. Similarly, investigating how strategic digital communication may assist NPOs to achieve their objectives through consistent evaluation and measurement could encourage NPOs to use digital channels in more informed and nuanced ways for stakeholder engagement (Carboni & Maxwell, 2015; Kim et al., 2014; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Paek et al., 2013).

2.3 NPOs and the Shift from Traditional to Digital Communication

The emergence of digital communication channels and the transformation of traditional communication through technology is proving a significant opportunity and challenge for NPOs. In *Screen Wars*, a report on a global survey of attitudes and behaviours across digital platforms, Nielson report 69 per cent of its research respondents believe “face to face interactions are being replaced with electronic ones” (Nielson, 2015, p. 1). Although Nielson’s research is reasonably broad in scale, it does reflect the growing appetite that members of the public have for digital communication. The non-profit sector is one group that has benefited significantly from digital channels, which offer a cost-effective means to engage with both internal and external audiences by extending the NPOs’ overall reach (Hou & Lampe, 2015). The ubiquity of digital channels in NPOs’ communication has also been acknowledged by scholars for some time, as they have asserted that integrating technology with traditional communication can enable the NPOs to connect and communicate with a wider range of stakeholders online at any given time (Grunig, 2009). However, although many organisations have readily adapted to using online tools and embraced them for the opportunities they provide for interactivity, the non-profit sector still appears to struggle to apply consistent and measured strategic communication across the channels currently used (Campbell, Lambright, & Wells, 2014; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Macnamara & Zerfass, 2012). Research by Macnamara (2010) into the digital practice of Australian NPOs also supports this suggestion. Findings reveal that while the NPOs are utilising digital channels as part of their communication strategy for marketing and promotion purposes, the NPOs participating in the study were not applying relationship theories to digital media to engage their stakeholders and maximise the best use of the digital channels.

Gray and Hopkins (2014), Kim et al. (2014), and Saxton and Waters (2014) maintain that NPOs are still relatively limited in their use of digital channels, in terms of applying public relations theories to their digital communication practice. Although digital channels are valued by many public relations

practitioners and NPOs for the opportunities they offer, challenges still exist that require further clarification, so that NPOs can gain the most benefit from their limited resources and time.

There is at present insufficient research across a range of digital channels to prove or disprove whether NPOs are utilising multiple digital platforms to achieve their organisational goals. Kim et al. (2014) state valuable research has been conducted recently, including assessments of how individual online channels are being used by practitioners as a strategic tool to foster stakeholder relationships and in dialogic communication, but they admit inconsistencies still exist in current research because of the ever-changing landscape of digital communication. Similarly, Wright and Hinson (2013) point in their longitudinal study on emerging digital communication to a lack of research on NPOs and their practitioners' use of digital communication and the effect of theoretical application for public relations best practice. Moreover, studies of the non-profit sector have predominately focused on specific NPO type or on individual channels, with scholars recommending more research is needed into the application and effects of multiple digital communication across a broader section of NPOs (Curtis et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2014; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Paek et al., 2013).

2.3.1 Media convergence and transmedia engagement

Converged media involves deploying content across multiple media platforms to achieve a unified strategic approach to communication. An example of a converged media campaign could include paid media advertising across TV, digital, and radio, earned media through social channels and/or public relations strategy, and owned content such as an organisation's brand (Jenkins, 2004, 2006). Jenkins (2004) notes this concept has largely been propelled by the need for organisations (for profit, as well as not-for-profit) to get online to reach audiences who have shifted in their consumption of media. Digital channels are recognised as a primary driver of converged media, as technological advances are creating greater opportunities, through a paradigm shift from monolithic media strategies, to encourage and broaden collaboration and participation through transmedia

engagement (Jenkins, 2006). However, media convergence is predominantly focused on getting the brand and story told across every platform.

Transmedia storytelling is based on the premise that building an immersive online presence will provide a multi-layered approach to provide depth to communication, which will in turn increase audience engagement and participation. Jenkins (2006) describes transmedia as a strategy where information can be dispensed and segmented across a variety of channels, and points to the participatory possibilities opened by converged media so that audiences are provided with a richer, more immersive communicative experience. Pammet (2015) notes this perspective requires careful consideration of the attributes of each channel to gain the most benefit. This will ensure NPOs are providing content that is interrelated, but still acknowledges the distinctly unique communicative opportunities that each channel can provide. Interestingly, Pammet (2015) notes that findings from previous studies have been unclear how effective public relations excellence theories are applied within a transmedia context. Similarly, Edmond (2015) notes previous literature has focused more on transmedia practice using fictional narratives, rather than on public relations. More consideration could therefore be given to study how impressions, reach, likes, shares and/or communicative exchange relate to public relations theories, when applied across digital channels for transmedia engagement.

Barker and Sutherland (2013) applied their research to assess transmedia storytelling from a practitioner perspective. They note that multiple channels have often been used without consideration for the strategic gains they can achieve. However, they also recognise that research examining transmedia use by NPOs through the lens of public relations theories is still limited. It is entirely possible that NPOs are fearful that transmedia storytelling or engagement may fragment their communication strategies, and may lessen the impact of their communicative efforts instead of improving it. This may reflect in push back from NPOs if practitioners suggest using transmedia engagement as a potential strategy. Barker and Sutherland (2013), Pammet (2015), and Edmond

(2015) all argue that transmedia theories are conducive with public relations and stakeholder engagement. Limited access to digital channels has previously been noted as an issue preventing organisational interactions with some stakeholders, particularly those from older age groups (Jenkins, 2006). However, this concept is now being overtaken by a growing concern around how converged media might encourage greater participation and communication to reach and maintain relationships with a technologically savvy generation of stakeholders. NPOs now have more access than ever to devices and digital channels and therefore to the users of those channels. Barker and Sutherland (2013) assert that deeper insight into how transmedia could be better used will assist public relations practitioners to provide advice to the non-profit sector using transmedia engagement strategies individually (and collectively), to achieve communicative best practice across multiple digital channels, which can then improve audience reach and interaction.

2.4 NPOs' use of Digital Channels

2.4.1 Communicating using digital channels

NPOs may vary in size and mission, but their organisational objectives are inherently similar. A primary concern for NPOs is building and maintaining relationships. In this context, Kim and Hammick (2013) state "the dialogic features of social media become critical for organisation-public relation management" (p. 10). The benefits of digital communication, particularly with respect to the non-profit sector and its ongoing efforts to build community awareness, communication and stakeholder relationships, have been explored by many scholars (Briones et al., 2010; Kenix, 2008; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Saxton & Waters, 2014; Waters et al., 2009). However, while digital communication may be strategically used to improve communication and relationships with NPOs' stakeholders, questions still exist as to whether NPOs are taking advantage of the full attributes that each digital channel provides (Campbell et al., 2014).

Park and Lee (2013) and Williams and Brunner (2010) have also asserted interactions and dialogue, including those undertaken through online participation, are essential for an audience to perceive they have a relationship with an organisation. Park and Lee (2013) directed their research at both for-profit and non-profit organisations, to ascertain whether their research subjects utilise dialogic communication strategies to improve organisation-public relationships through interactions across Twitter, and whether this improves relational outcomes. The scholars found that NPOs are not yet making the most of Twitter and note NPOs must continue to evolve their communication strategies if they wish to meet their relationship goals and keep up with growing technological change, or they risk finding themselves left behind.

It is widely acknowledged by scholars and practitioners that digital communication does come with a degree of risk, to both the brand and the reputation of an organisation (Parveen et al., 2015; Warner, Abel, & Hachtmann, 2014). However, if strategies are put in place to mitigate the risks, then NPOs can use digital communication to its utmost potential to share information and engage with stakeholders through a single channel, or across multiple channels.

Campbell et al.'s (2014) study analysed the extent of digital communication use by public and NPOs, to understand how often participants use digital platforms to engage with stakeholders, and to identify if barriers exist that may prevent the non-profit sector from using online channels more often. The scholars note the lack of research on smaller NPOs, and assert that the existing research typically also focuses on either one particular channel, or on digital communication as a very broad typology. To fill the gaps that they identified, Campbell et al. (2014) chose the most widely used channels, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and blogs, for their research. They found Facebook to be the most popular channel, used by 56 per cent of the non-profit providers in their study. However, numerous barriers appear to discourage the non-profit sector from taking advantage of all of the capacities on offer with digital media. These barriers include a lack of knowledge on how best to use digital communication channels to engage in dialogic communication with stakeholders.

Indications from existing research are that digital channels can equip NPOs with a suite of dialogic tools for strategic communication and stakeholder relationship management. Yet, many studies to date seem to have reached the conclusion that NPOs are not using them strategically to achieve a dialogic purpose (Kenix, 2008). Toledano (2010) agrees, noting a lack of practitioner knowledge may be preventing NPOs from applying theoretical public relations knowledge to their online communication. Hou and Lampe's (2015) purposive study seems to confirm that most NPOs are still impeded by the challenges of communicating with varied audiences across multiple channels. Hou and Lampe (2015) state "NPOs lack proper strategies to make use of technology affordances" (p. 2). Most research appears to focus on the diffusion of digital communication. A comparative analysis could assess if NPOs are using theoretical best practice to apply their digital communication strategically to specific channels, or across multiple channels, to engage and build relationships with their stakeholders.

Although digital communication is being regularly deployed by NPOs, digital channels are still predominately used for one-way dissemination of messages (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; O'Neil & Schieffer, 2014; Svensson, Mahoney, & Hambrick, 2014; Warner, Abel, & Hachtmann, 2014). Svensson et al. (2014) assert this is largely because the non-profit sector still appears to consider organisational websites as the channel of choice for relationship building online, despite the theoretical foundation that two-way communication, which is not embodied in a website, is the best way to engage and build relationships with stakeholders. In their study, Svensson et al. (2014) assessed NPOs' usage of Twitter as an online communication channel and their findings indicate NPOs are not using Twitter, any more than websites, as a two-way communicative tool.

Hou and Lampe (2015) emphasise that the non-profit sector's benefit from use of digital channels as a communicative function is often determined by an individual organisation's strategy for building stakeholder relationships and its capacity for two-way engagement through its digital communication channels. NPOs are also much more likely to facilitate online participation if they

can align the benefits of the digital channels with their organisational goals (Parveen, Jaafar, & Ainin, 2015). However, digital technology continues to grow and evolve, which also creates challenges for communication practitioners attempts to align their digital communication with their NPOs' communication strategy. Macnamara and Zerfass (2012) agree that "coping with the digital evolution...is rated one of the most important issues for communication management over the coming years" (p. 304). The differences between channels, the unique characteristics of each, and how each one can and should be used by practitioners in the non-profit sector requires deeper analysis, so that communication practitioners from NPOs can make informed decisions about how to select from the multitude of digital channels as part of an integrated communication strategy.

2.4.2 Websites

Websites are the digital channel most widely used by NPOs, and most NPOs have developed their own websites to communicate with a wider audience of stakeholders for a variety of purposes (Branston & Bush, 2010; Wiencek, 2014; Ingenhoff & Koelling, 2009). In a United States-based study of NPOs and their use of websites, Branston and Bush (2010) assessed the implications of communication across digital channels for NPOs' stakeholder relationships and compared the results with donations or volunteer support gained through networking online. In their findings, the scholars provide evidence that NPOs are using their websites predominately for the purposes of gaining donations. Branston and Bush (2010) state that with technology changes across digital channels and the shift from one way dissemination to two-way dialogic communication and engagement, challenges do exist for NPOs as "it has become harder to translate online support to offline action" (p. 11). Further, Branston and Bush (2010) suggest that NPOs' digital channels would be far better utilised for building long-term relationships and dialogic communication with stakeholders, rather than focusing on direct donation ask or volunteer recruitment. However, they advise that NPOs still appear to consider digital channels, above any other purpose, as a replacement for traditional communication to obtain donor and volunteer action. Therefore,

Branston and Bush (2010) recommend that NPOs seek further guidance on best practice for digital communication, so they can use their digital channels more effectively to achieve their strategic purpose of fundraising and stakeholder engagement.

Ingenhoff and Koelling (2009) conducted a study of NPOs in Switzerland to assess whether the NPOs are using websites to promote stakeholder engagement through any dialogic capacity that the channel can allow. In their study, Ingenhoff and Koelling (2009) recommend that the analysis should assess websites against the five principles of dialogue proposed by Kent and Taylor (1998) to assess: “ease of interface, usefulness of information, conservation of visitors, generation of return visits and dialogic loop” (p. 67). Through their research, the scholars concluded that NPOs do use their website proactively for engagement with donors, encouraging a click through to donate or a form to fill in on the website landing page. However, Ingenhoff and Koelling (2009) suggest the NPOs fall short on stakeholder engagement, and recommend NPOs improve their online communication and encourage engagement with stakeholders through the addition of surveys, forms and chatrooms to their websites. Although the scholars have expressed uncertainty as to whether their findings can be generalised across all NPOs using digital channels, they have also questioned whether NPOs do prefer other digital channels for stakeholder engagement (Ingenhoff & Koelling, 2009). Further, Ingenhoff and Koelling (2009) are unsure whether the low uptake of NPOs using their websites to engage in dialogic communication with stakeholders is due to financial limitations, and they propose further research could assess what is preventing NPOs from using websites to their fullest dialogic advantage.

More recently, Kim et al. (2014) have studied NPOs in the environmental sector, to assess how NPOs apply dialogic principles across multiple digital channels, in comparison to their websites. The scholars employed a coding tool to find correlations that may show a dialogic loop between content on the NPOs’ websites and interactions and messaging on the multiple other digital channels the NPOs use. While the researchers found Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to be the most utilised

digital channels, Kim et al.'s. (2014) research participants still appear to drive their dialogic communication predominately through their organisation's website. Results of their analysis suggest NPOs consider their website as their core communication channel and consider other digital channels as additional tools, with a purpose of supplementing any communication, rather than individual channels that can be used to achieve a specific strategic purpose. Kim et al. (2014) note further studies are required on a broader sample of the non-profit sector, focusing on practitioner interviews to assess whether integrated communication strategies have been employed to engage multiple digital channels, and whether practitioners understand the benefits of employing transmedia to achieve their dialogic purpose.

2.4.3 Facebook

Caers et al.'s (2013) review of published articles provides an overview and timeline of the changes that have occurred with Facebook from its original intended purpose, through to the opportunities it now provides for NPOs. The scholars reinforce that although Facebook was created to connect individuals, the scope has widened since its inception so that it is now considered a viable tool for NPOs to communicate with stakeholders (Caers et al., 2013). However, recent changes to Facebook have monetised the service it provides. Ballings, Van den Poel, and Bogaert (2015) describe how organisations' strategies to increase post reach across Facebook are achieved through organic strategies or paid strategies. Organic strategies consist of carefully orchestrated posts where the practitioner has considered elements including the length, timing and type of post to achieve maximum likes, comments and shares (Ballings et al., 2015). The pay off for organisations that are able to commit practitioner knowledge, time and consideration to organic strategies is that Facebook will pick up popular organic posts and push them out further to more Facebook users, potentially increasing audience reach. Conversely, paid posts require nothing more than a post that has money behind it to boost reach, which Facebook does on behalf of the organisation (Ballings et al., 2015). The issue for the non-profit sector is that paid posts have increased the risk of choking

organic posts, which could have significant implications for NPOs because of the cost involved to keep pushing their stories to boost audience reach. Additionally, wider issues that could impact on NPOs' use of Facebook as a digital communication channel include the bustling feeds that impact organisational messages/posts so that they simply become lost among the many other status updates, checkins and stories in the target audiences' newsfeeds.

A recent study has focused more specifically on Facebook and theoretical relationship strategies. O'Neil and Schieffer's (2014) study into NPOs and Fortune 500 companies assesses how these two groups use Facebook to cultivate relationships, aiming to identify if the practices adopted varied by organisation type. O'Neil and Schieffer (2014) report NPOs' results are comparable with the other organisation types and NPOs use a limited range of relationship strategies. However, the findings also suggest that the non-profit sector is largely focused on initiating one-way communication, indicating the NPOs that participated are yet to fully utilise Facebook for the relationship strategies this channel allows. The researchers acknowledge the limitations of their research, as they focused on large NPOs to consider a single facet of relationship cultivation theory.

Campbell et al. (2014) examine how and why the non-profit and public sector use digital channels, to identify whether the organisations effectively use these tools to engage with stakeholders. The researchers assessed the extent of online communication use, including the use of Facebook and Twitter, as these were the two channels most frequently used by the research participants. The researchers' findings also suggest digital communication in general is still not widely used by non-profit organisations. However, Campbell et al. (2014) admit that their research may not be indicative of the wider non-profit sector as the study was limited to human services organisations within New York State. As the data collation was completed over 2011 and 2012, it may now be out of date with the constantly evolving technological change. Campbell et al. (2014) also note the additional value ongoing research could have, if shared with NPOs to strengthen their dialogic practice. This sharing could empower non-profit organisations with best practice communicative

tools, so they can improve their digital communication strategies and build stronger relationships with their stakeholders.

2.4.4 Twitter

Twitter has gone through an exponential rise in popularity amongst non-profit organisations since its inception (Park & Lee, 2013; Svensson et al., 2014). Non-profit organisations can use Twitter to post tweets of up to 140 characters as a real-time communication tool to reach a large audience. Twitter has also been characterised by scholars as a digital channel that can offer specific dialogic opportunities for interactivity with stakeholders that could never be reached via websites (Saffer, Sommerfeldt, & Taylor, 2013).

Rybalko and Seltzer (2010) examine how Fortune 500 companies engage Twitter to build relationships with stakeholders, by applying Kent and Taylor's (2002) dialogic public relations theories to their analysis. Rybalko and Seltzer (2010) selected 93 companies that had the most Twitter posts from their research sample group and found that although much of the sample group (61 per cent) applied dialogic practice to their use of Twitter, 39 per cent of the group still do not utilise the dialogic purpose that Twitter can provide. Similar research findings are reported by Park and Lee (2013), Saxton and Lovejoy (2012), and Waters and Jamal (2011), all of whom assert that many NPOs are still not utilising the full dialogic attributes that are inherent in digital tools like Twitter. Furthermore, Rybalko and Seltzer (2010) recommend that NPOs should adopt public relations theories, and make use of measurement tools available within the Twittersphere so that NPOs can engage in dialogic best practice with stakeholders. However, Rybalko and Seltzer (2010) did note the limitations of their study, including the small number of companies they based their findings on, and suggest that a wider study would be beneficial. This sentiment is shared by Saffer et al. (2013), who recommend that further situational and theoretical research is required, from a

public relations perspective, to determine how Twitter and/or other digital channels might best serve the communicative needs of the non-profit sector.

2.4.5 Electronic newsletters

One further online tool that NPOs utilise to reach internal and external audiences is electronic newsletters (e-newsletters). E-newsletters are a low-cost alternative to traditional hard copy communication such as print newsletters, and are deployed by many NPOs because they are a relatively low-risk application in comparison to other digital channels (Kinzey, 2013). Perhaps surprisingly, e-newsletters still provide opportunities to engage in two-way communication. Visuals, links to video, links driving readers to the NPO's website, and additional opportunities to target specific audiences mean e-newsletters are an enticing proposition for the non-profit sector (Buchanan & Luck, 2006; Maslowska, Putte, & Smit, 2011). However, the e-newsletter is also recognised as one of the least researched of all digital channels (Buchanan & Luck, 2006; Gray, Hopkins, & Kirkwood, 2015; Gray & Hopkins, 2014). Overall, the affordances of e-newsletters have barely been examined in existing research, and research is limited on studies that relate specifically to New Zealand NPOs from a public relations perspective. The shortage of literature indicates there is an existing gap with regards to research on New Zealand NPOs and their use of e-newsletters to achieve their strategic goals.

2.4.6 Blogs

Blogs have become a popular tool for NPOs to facilitate communication and connect with stakeholders, providing timely updates and information (Briones et al., 2010; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Kent, 2008). Blogs are seen as a credible engagement tool to inform stakeholders and public, as well as to facilitate communication by driving the target audience to other digital channels such as Facebook (Saxton & Waters, 2014). Research on how NPOs have facilitated stakeholder communication using blogs has predominately focused on the messages

posted, to determine how they affect organisation/public relationships. Curtis et al.'s (2010) study of NPO digital channel usage includes blogs. They found 48.4 per cent of respondents use blogs as a channel to communicate with their stakeholders, which indicates that blogs are among the most used channels (by NPOs), just behind email, social networks, and video sharing. Their findings suggest that practitioners do find blogs to be a credible source for communicating with an organisation's audience. Hou and Lampe (2015) assert NPOs use blogs as an engagement tool. However, blogs will not be effective as an engagement tool unless NPOs include them as part of their overall communication strategy, with clearly defined objectives for each and every channel (Curtis et al., 2010; Hou & Lampe, 2015). Existing research does not appear to consider how the non-profit sector could strengthen its blogging strategies specifically. Similarly, research streams analysed for this study have not yet assessed whether practitioners from NPOs aligned their blogs with theories of public relations practice, nor identified how NPOs' use of blogs differs from other digital communication channels such as YouTube, Twitter or Facebook.

2.4.7 Online video - YouTube

Online video channels have changed the way NPOs communicate with their stakeholders. Recent studies by scholars including Barker and Sutherland (2013) and Waters and Jones (2011), recognise that practitioners from NPOs have been empowered with the ability to reach an audience directly, using video as a strategic public relations tool. However, as with all the other channels assessed so far, this research again delivers conflicting reports as to whether NPOs are truly capitalising on the opportunities YouTube can bestow for stakeholder engagement and relationship building.

Waters and Jones' (2011) study primarily focuses on whether their research participants use YouTube as a channel to strengthen the NPO's identity. In their findings, the scholars note that NPOs are actively using YouTube as a strategic tool to reinforce key messages and their organisational activities. They argue that YouTube enables NPOs to reach larger audience groups

using their own resources, rather than having to rely on the goodwill and/or cost of mediated communication. Further, Waters and Jones (2011) assert YouTube is frequently employed by NPOs to “educate and inform” (p. 248). Interestingly, the researchers suggest that the research participants actuate YouTube too broadly, and do not appear to use it for relationship building through sharing success stories or to engage stakeholders effectively.

2.4.8 Instagram

Instagram is a unique digital channel in that it is a photo and short video clip-based mobile platform (most digital channels are predominately text-based), where users can post, like and share images or short video clips, and follow individuals, celebrities and/or organisations they may choose to engage with online. It has been lauded by Messner and Guidry (2015) as “one of the fastest growing social media platforms” (p. 1). Researchers including Lovejoy and Saxton (2012), E. Lee, J. Lee, Moon, and Sung (2015), Messner and Guidry (2015), and Russmann and Svensson (2016) acknowledge the potential of Instagram for NPOs wishing to engage and/or build relationships online.

E. Lee et al. (2015) surveyed 212 Korean users of the platform, to examine the primary reasons individuals use Instagram as a channel. The research participants were aged between 20-39 years of age and had been using the channel for 10.3 months on average. In their research findings, E. Lee et al. (2015) reveal “social interaction is a strong factor in that Instagram users are motivated to establish and maintain social relationships with other people using this platform” (p. 555). Their study only evaluated the users of the channel and has not looked at the implications for NPOs who may want to use Instagram for stakeholder. However, they suggest that Instagram is an application worth consideration for any organisation wanting to promote its brand or profile online.

Messner and Guidry (2015) examine the ethical implications and challenges for ten NPOs from the United States health sector using Instagram. Through a qualitative interview with each NPO’s representative, followed by a quantitative content analysis conducted over three months, the

researchers examine the online communication and engagement, along with the social media policies, of the participating NPOs. The scholars focus on identifying how the NPOs are engaging stakeholders through Instagram, whether any ethical challenges exist in communicating through that channel, and whether social media policies and guidelines have been implemented. Results suggest that Instagram use by NPOs in the health sector is still very much experiential, based purely on trial and error rather than on any theoretical foundation. Interestingly, eight of the ten NPOs had a social media policy and set of guidelines in place for their digital communication, and the other two were in the process of developing a policy to help guide their online communication for the future. However, these policies were primarily focused on ethics, including employee posting and good behaviour online, and the NPOs were cognisant that the rules for ethical behaviour, including banning sharing of images online, can be a barrier to sharing and engaging with the online audience through image-based channels such as Instagram. While Messner and Guidry (2015) provide some clarification on NPOs use of Instagram, the scholars recommend that a broader analysis of NPOs and the level/types of engagement they have on Instagram is needed.

While existing research suggests Instagram may be an effective online communication channel for NPOs, extending opportunities for building relationships, scholars (Messner & Guidry, 2015; Russmann & Svensson, 2016) also acknowledge academic research on Instagram falls considerably short in comparison to studies on more well-known (and therefore perhaps more popular with NPOs) channels such as Facebook and Twitter.

2.4.9 LinkedIn

LinkedIn provides individuals, businesses and organisations with opportunities for professional networking, recruiting, information sharing and participation. As the functionality of LinkedIn has grown, researchers have noted the platform has increased in appeal as an online channel for NPOs

to achieve their organisational goals (Calkins, 2013; Hou & Lampe 2015; Witzig, Spencer, & Galvin, 2012).

In their study, Witzig et al. (2012) compare three types of organisations (200 large companies, 200 small businesses, and 200 NPOs) across the United States, to assess whether/how these organisations are using LinkedIn for online engagement and participation. Their study reported specifically on whether the participating organisations had a LinkedIn page (to determine organisation buy-in to the channel), whether the LinkedIn logo was displayed on each organisation's website (to demonstrate the organisation encourages participation using that channel), and whether the organisation leaders had a personal LinkedIn account (to indicate if the participating organisation's management value LinkedIn as a professional network). Findings indicate that each of the research groups do value having a LinkedIn account to use as a digital channel for the NPOs' communication toolkit. However, even though 93 per cent of the NPOs had a LinkedIn page, only 12 per cent promoted the LinkedIn logo on their website. Witzig, Spencer, and Galvin (2012) suggest that NPOs are not using LinkedIn as readily as their other digital channels and they posit this could be due to a shortage of resources rather than any other definitive reasoning. The researchers recommend further studies could assess what, or if, barriers exist for NPOs looking to expand their online communication to include LinkedIn alongside their other digital channels for online participation and engagement. However, there appears to be a shortage of literature on the subject of NPOs' use of LinkedIn for stakeholder engagement or relationship management, which makes it difficult to determine whether NPOs are actually using this channel as part of their strategic digital communication for stakeholder engagement.

2.4.10 Measurement or evaluation of channels by practitioners

Communication practitioners employed by non-profit organisations will continue to be challenged by the changes to technology as long as digital media continues to evolve as a vehicle for dialogic

communication (Branston & Bush, 2010; Schoenmaker, 2014). Practitioners will need to continually meet organisational expectations through the ever-changing landscape of digital media. The only way that the success of online communication can be proven to an organisation is if the outcomes meet the organisational goals, and this requires constant evaluation of the channels and the outcomes to determine if those channels are being used effectively.

The non-profit sector does require support to ensure it can build a better understanding of how best to use online channels to build and maintain relationships. However, indications from research by Kaul (2013) and Liu (2012) suggest practitioners from NPOs are ambivalent toward new online channels, and struggle with how best to evaluate their communication efforts. This suggestion is also shared by Waters et al. (2009) and Briones et al. (2010), who assert that evaluation of digital channels as a specific communication tool is lacking in the non-profit sector. Schoenmaker (2014), Briones et al. (2010), and Toledano (2010) indicate that one reason NPOs struggle to undertake measurement to solidify their communicative efforts is that their online presence may not be taken seriously enough from an organisational perspective.

The shortage of resources that is notorious within the non-profit sector often prevents NPOs from measuring or evaluating their communication outcomes. Kenix (2008) interviewed 52 practitioners from NPOs to assess their use of the internet, and asserts that practitioners do realise the value of online communication to build and maintaining relationships; they just struggle with a shortage of resources, along with limited research proving best practice public relations in the online environment across multiple channels.

2.5 Conclusion

Overall, research demonstrates that relationship and dialogic theories are relevant to online public relations best practice. Yet the way in which, and the degree to which, those theories impact digital

communication in strategic communication practice by the non-profit sector needs further clarification. Findings in this review reveal a paucity of research that might illuminate how New Zealand NPOs are using digital channels to achieve a dialogic communicative purpose. A robust research process could provide a significant snapshot of how NPOs are performing professionally within the public relations sphere, with specific reference to digital media use for stakeholder engagement and relationship management. A comparative approach could provide greater understanding of how NPOs are applying their online communication strategy to not just one, but a range of digital communication channels. Findings could then be used to improve digital communication strategies and assist the New Zealand non-profit sector to build stronger stakeholder relationships online.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.1 RQ 1a: Are New Zealand NPOs using multiple digital channels to communicate with their various stakeholders?

RQ1b: What channels are they using, and how and why have they chosen these channels?

3.2 RQ2a: Are New Zealand NPOs engaging their digital channels strategically to cultivate relationships with their stakeholders?

RQ2b: What do NPOs hope to achieve; what are they achieving?

3.3 RQ3a: Are New Zealand NPOs applying public relations theories of stakeholder engagement and dialogic communication to their digital communication?

RQ3b: How could NPOs employ theory to improve their use of digital channels?

4. OBJECTIVES

The objective of this research is to examine how New Zealand non-profit organisations use multiple digital channels for stakeholder engagement. The aim is to provide findings-driven and theory-grounded recommendations for the New Zealand non-profit sector to apply to its digital communication, so that New Zealand NPOs are better equipped with public relations theoretical knowledge as a foundation to assist them to achieve their strategic organisational goals through the digital communication channels they employ.

The research objectives for this study are:

1. To explore the digital technologies used by mid-to-large New Zealand non-profit organisations and identify the platforms/channels most commonly used.
2. To assess how and why New Zealand NPOs' practitioners are using digital technologies, conducting interviews that will elicit responses to how and why NPOs use the channels/platforms, followed by a quantitative content analysis, which will also elucidate how NPOs are using the channels.
3. To examine the NPOs' organisational communication goals with regards to digital technologies and analyse whether those goals are being achieved, and to identify any problems with current usage of digital technologies, as reported by the NPOs' communication practitioners.
4. To determine if the New Zealand non-profit sector is strategically using multiple digital platforms/channels, by drawing on stakeholder engagement and dialogic theories to build and maintain stakeholder relationships.
5. To provide recommendations as to how New Zealand NPOs could enhance their stakeholder relationships by drawing on theory to improve best practice across their digital communication strategy.

5. METHODOLOGY

The literature review on New Zealand and international NPOs shows that there is still limited research available to guide NPOs on best practice for strategic communication using multiple digital channels for effective stakeholder engagement. Qualitative research has been posited as an effective methodology for public relations research into relationship management and stakeholder engagement (Haigh et al., 2013; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). Most of the research reviewed for this study has utilised a qualitative approach to examine practitioners' personal experience with digital communication. A number of studies have also applied a quantitative methodology through a content analysis of specific digital channels to assess communication strategies, compare them with public relations theories, and provide measurable findings on the relevance of the theories for NPOs' online communication. This research into the New Zealand non-profit sector follows a similar methodology to those previous studies, combining qualitative interviews with a content analysis of various digital communication channels, so the results can be compared with recent international studies and theoretical public relations research. Using two methods of data collection will help ensure the research findings are both valid and robust.

5.1 Interview Research Process

Applying a qualitative research process, 34 communication practitioners from mid-to-large size New Zealand NPOs were invited to participate in 20-minute telephone interviews to elicit what channels they are using, which channels are the most commonly used, and how those channels are being used. The New Zealand NPOs were randomly identified online from *The Charities Register* (2016). Of those NPOs invited, 20 communication practitioners accepted the invitation to participate.

Sample criteria for the organisations participating in this study included size. Mid-to-large New Zealand based non-profit organisations were chosen because they were of sufficient size to have communication practitioners charged with overseeing the NPOs' communication strategy. Each NPO was coded with an assigned organisation (Org) number, and referred to by number only for the purposes of this research, to maintain the participants' anonymity. Further information on the reasons for coding each NPO is provided in the ethical considerations section (provided in Section 5.3) of this thesis.

Table 2 provides more detail on each NPO participating in this research, including the sectors the New Zealand NPOs belong to and their primary purpose, as specified online on *The Charities Register* (2016).

Table 2: Participating NPOs' sectors and primary purpose

Organisation	Sectors	Primary Purpose
Org1	Social Services	Advice/Information/Advocacy
Org2	Health	Research
Org3	Health	Services
Org4	International Aid	Services
Org5	Education/Training/Research	Services
Org6	Emergency	Services
Org7	Education/Training/Research	Services
Org8	Health	Services
Org9	Social Services	Services
Org10	Fundraising	Children/young people
Org11	Social Services	Services
Org12	Health	Services
Org13	Health	Advice/Information/Advocacy
Org14	Health	Services
Org15	Social Services	Advice/Information/Advocacy
Org16	Environment	Fundraising/Grants
Org17	Disability	Services
Org18	Health	Services
Org19	Social Services	Services
Org20	Disability	Services

A structured approach to in-depth interviews with open-ended questions allowed the NPOs' practitioners to provide the interviewer with a direction and purpose for the research, and enabled both substantial and reliable data collection (Babbie, 2013; Poland, 1995; Turner, 2010; Williams, 2007). Turner (2010) notes "standardized open-ended interviews are likely the most popular form of interviewing utilized in research studies because of the nature of the open-ended questions, allowing the participants to fully express their viewpoints and experiences" (p. 756). Combining open-ended and closed questions elicited information on which platforms/channels NPOs prefer to use and how they use them, as well as allowing practitioners to share their knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000).

Drawing on previous literature on the non-profit sector, digital channels and stakeholder engagement, a set of questions was formulated to identify the purposes NPOs may want to achieve. The most popular purposes motivating NPOs to undertake strategic digital communication are: stakeholder engagement, volunteer or donor recruitment, fundraising, public relations, marketing new or existing services or programmes, and/or general goals such as advocacy or campaigning (Branston & Bush, 2010; Gray & Hopkins, 2014; Kim et al., 2014; Kirkwood, 2014; Waters et al., 2009). The interview questions are provided in Appendix C, in the Appendices section of this thesis.

Through the initial interview process, the interviewer identified the five most widely used digital channels used by the participating New Zealand NPOs to communicate and engage with their stakeholders. The communication practitioners were asked to explain their reasons for selecting particular digital technologies and whether they believe they are making the most of multiple channels to cultivate and maintain relationships with their stakeholders. Interview questions probed into what the communication practitioners saw as areas of strengths or weakness with the digital channels they are using the most often to engage with their stakeholders. These findings also provided interesting insights to help answer whether organisations are using an informed and coherent communication strategy in their use of digital channels.

During the data collection process the utmost care was taken to ensure the anonymity of the communication practitioners and the NPOs in this study. Each phone interview was recorded and transcribed, providing text for coding; individual participants have not been identified in this thesis. The transcribed text was coded into subject categories, and analysed further using *HyperRESEARCH* software. These coded findings provide qualitative contextual evidence to determine how communication practitioners use and align their digital communication with their organisational goals for stakeholder engagement and dialogic communication (Frey et al., 2000).

Table 3 outlines the research process for the interviews and data collation method.

Table 3: Process for qualitative interview research

Initial findings helped drive the second data analysis stage of this research, which involved assessing in depth the most popular digital channels that five of the participating NPOs deploy to achieve their communicative strategic goals. The second data analysis stage (the content analysis) is discussed in Section 5.2.

5.2 Content Analysis Research Process

Content analysis is an effective data collection tool used often in public relations and communication research (Cho & De Moya, 2014; Waters & Jamal, 2011; Wiencek, 2014). However, most of the research reviewed in this thesis focused on one channel, or a few specific channels, to compare NPOs' digital communication efforts against theoretical research. In this study, the author was guided by the interview responses to narrow the research focus to five channels most commonly used by the sample group of New Zealand NPOs. To narrow the focus further, the NPOs using all five of the most popular digital channels (identified in the interviews) were emailed to request a copy of their e-newsletter, for detailed analysis. The five NPOs that agreed to participate in the content analysis of their digital channels are: Org4, Org5, Org16, Org19 and Org20.

The purpose of the content analysis was to identify whether the NPOs have employed public relations theories of stakeholder engagement and dialogism through their digital channels, to help achieve their organisation's strategic purpose. The content analysis of the digital channels included two stages. Specifically, in the first stage each digital channel was analysed to assess whether each was being used effectively by the NPOs to encourage online participation, and to identify whether the organisation's communication strategies varied across multiple channels. The second stage analysed the channels to assess what purposes the channels are being used to achieve, and whether NPOs have promoted stakeholder interactions via each channel.

The criteria for the first stage of the content analysis replicated studies by Bortree and Seltzer (2009), Ingenhoff and Koelling (2009), and Kim et al. (2014), to base the analysis on Kent and Taylor's (1998) five principles of dialogue – ease of interface, usefulness of information, conservation of visitors, generation of return visitors, and dialogic loop (discussed previously in Section 2.2.1 and 2.4.2 of the literature review), so the results could be compared with prior studies and the results compared with the qualitative interviews undertaken as part of this study. The analysis criteria were modified to fit the digital channels (as recommended by Bortree and Seltzer, 2009) to recognise the varying context of specific digital channels.

To provide a snapshot of the communication delivered by the New Zealand NPOs, and obtain sufficient data for analysis, the content analysis was performed on the nominated top five digital channels. This included analysing the NPO's website landing page; most recent e-newsletter; Facebook channel; Twitter channel; and YouTube channel. The purpose of this overarching view of each channel was to assess if the channels encourage digital communication with stakeholders through assessing specific content, namely logos and information promoting the other digital channels, the number of followers, the number of posts and/or sharing of posts and the number of interactions (assessing whether dialogic communication had taken place).

The categories for the content analysis of the NPOs website landing page are detailed in Table 4.

Table 4: NPOs digital channel content analysis chart

Digital Channel Analysis	Assessment Criteria
Website Landing Page	Links to digital channels Contact details for the NPO Links to stakeholder's digital channel/s Links to sign up for e-newsletter Links to like/share stories on social media channels
Analysis of Facebook (+14 Days of Posts)	Number of Facebook followers Rating by audience reviews (Star rating) Contact information for Org – link to website Blue (authenticity) or grey (celebrity/public figure) verification badge Visuals – sharing video posts or images Message/Donate/Contact button Links to promote other digital channels Likes (total across posts) Shares (total across posts) Comments (total across posts) Posts by Org (excluding shared posts) Stakeholders' posts shared by org)
Analysis of Twitter (+14 Days of Posts)	Number of Twitter followers Number of Twitter accounts NPO follows Tweets by NPO Retweets by NPO Likes on NPOs posts Likes on NPOs Retweets Shares by audience on NPOs Tweets Total shares by audience on NPOs Retweets Engagement – NPOs response to comments on Tweets Links to NPO's other digital channels Posts include visuals – video
Analysis of E-newsletter	Contact information for NPO Links to NPO's other digital channels Complete stories or snapshot with links Feedback opportunity Subject line personalised
Analysis of YouTube (platform and most recent post)	Subscribers to the channel Number of videos total on the NPO's channel Most recent video post views Likes on post Dislikes on post Links back to digital channels

The second stage of the content analysis involved assessing the content on the NPO's e-newsletter and website landing page; posts and shares on Facebook and tweets on Twitter over a two-week period; and the most recent video upload to YouTube. This second stage aimed to determine whether, or how well, New Zealand NPOs are achieving six strategic purposes across the five most popular digital communication channels. The criteria for assessing the channels was determined from previous studies, including (but not limited to): Bortree and Seltzer (2009), Branston and Bush (2010), Cho and De Moya (2014), Waters et al. (2009), and Waters and Jamal (2011), who applied their research to assess whether, and/or how, NPOs use digital channels, to achieve their strategic purposes: all used similar assessment criteria in their research. As outlined in the literature review, the scholars report varied results around whether the NPOs are successfully applying stakeholder, relationship management and/or public relations theories to their digital communication practice.

The assessment criteria assigned to each strategic purpose for this content analysis is provided in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Assessing the strategic purpose of posts/content

Digital Channel Content/Post Purpose	Assessment Criteria
Stakeholder engagement	Promotion of stakeholders and/or providing opportunities for communication with/for stakeholders
Recruiting or communicating with volunteers	Promotion of recruitment and/or two-way communication with volunteers
Fundraising and gaining donor support	Promotion of fundraising campaign or direct donation ask
PR to build reputation and credibility	Promotion of news items and/or stories and success or sharing expert knowledge
Marketing new or existing services or programmes	Promotion of events and/or marketing sales or services
General organisational goals including advocacy or campaigning	Promotion of current campaigns or NPO advocacy goals

The results of the content analysis were then compared against the qualitative interview data to show whether a correlation or disparity exists between what the NPO wants to achieve through its digital communication channels and what the digital channels indicate is actually being achieved. It was hoped that combining two collection methodologies would enhance the validity of the similarities, differences, and patterns that emerged (Babbie, 2013; Poland, 1995; Williams, 2007).

5.3 Ethical Considerations

While the primary purpose for this research was to make a significant contribution to public relations studies on New Zealand NPOs and their digital communication strategies for stakeholder engagement, the anonymity of participating NPOs was still an important consideration to ensure ethical principles aligned with public relations best practice. Tracy (2010) notes “a variety of practices attend to ethics in qualitative research, including procedural, situational, relational, and exiting ethics” (p. 846-847).

The description of ethical best practice and the desired outcomes are outlined in Table 6.

Table 6: Key concepts for ethics practice (Tracy 2010)

Ethics Practice	Values	Outcome
Procedural ethics	Informed consent, privacy and confidentiality of participants and affected parties. Accuracy of data collated and is mindful of misrepresentation.	Participants are assured research is voluntary and anonymity is ensured. They also feel safe that any data collected is kept strictly confidential for the research itself.
Situational ethics	Moral responsibility to do no harm, and protect participants from undue stress or discomfort.	Researcher is mindful of the research and data to be exposed and will modify the presentation of the data according to the situation.
Relational ethics	Reciprocity between researcher and participant, moral responsibility to care.	Takes care in engaging research process and shares findings with research participants.
Exiting ethics	Ethical care of research findings and presentation so participants' anonymity is ensured long after research is complete.	Findings are presented in an appropriate format so they are not misused in any way that might intentionally or unintentionally defame or harm participants.

Ethical research that considers the care of participants and appropriateness of the research itself is more likely to achieve highly credible and valid data results (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Frey et al., 2000; Tracy, 2010). Guillemin and Gillam (2004) posit two dimensions that require careful consideration in qualitative studies: procedural ethics (making sure the researcher has considered ethics and has obtained appropriate ethics approval), and ethics in practice (the act of applying and considering ethics throughout the research and interview process to protect human participants). Both of these dimensions have been carefully considered for this research project. In addition, Guillemin and Gillam (2004) note that involving participants in the research adds another dimension to the research process. This includes regarding NPOs' communication practitioners as participants rather than subjects, and providing them with the means to become involved in the research as

contributors to published findings that they can use to further improve their own digital communication strategies (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

The qualitative interviews, along with names of participating NPOs and their communication practitioners, were only accessible to the researcher, supervisor and advisor, to provide evidence of data collation and accuracy of the transcribing/coding of interviews process. NPOs' names were kept anonymous to protect their privacy and maintain the ethics principles; therefore, the findings have been coded and published without disclosing names or any other information that could identify the organisational or individual participants (Frey et al., 2000).

Similarly, the content analysis followed ethical guidelines, as the intent of the study of the NPOs' digital channels was solely to study content and then compare the results against the qualitative interview data, so the researcher could assess whether relationships have been cultivated and maintained using stakeholder engagement and dialogic theories. To maintain anonymity of stakeholder, volunteer and donor responses in online channels, Roberts (2015) suggests reporting aggregated results, not naming the organisations, and paraphrasing any quotes so they are not searchable online. These measures will achieve the purpose of reporting on findings, whilst still protecting the privacy of individuals and the NPOs. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) state it is definitely possible to conduct research so that ethical considerations protect the interview participants, and yet still remain true to the integrity of the research process to ensure the qualitative results can report accurate and substantive findings.

To meet the procedural and practice dimensions required for ethics best practice in this research process, the screening questionnaire was completed and submitted to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC) at the outset of the research. An ethical analysis of the proposed research practice by peer review with the researcher's supervisor and advisor deemed this research as low risk. Subsequently the Notification of Low Risk Research/Evaluation Involving Human

Participants was approved. These forms have been included in Appendix A of the Appendices section of this report.

6. RESULTS

The purpose for the study was to investigate New Zealand NPO's use of digital communication channels to assess their practices and goals regarding engaging their stakeholders, and assess whether the NPOs are applying public relations theories of communication best practice to engage and build stakeholder relationships using digital channels. Communication practitioners from 20 NPOs participated in the research interviews, which were undertaken by telephone. Each communication practitioner was asked to identify the five digital channels they use the most often to communicate with their audiences.

The five digital channels that were the most frequently used overall were: websites, e-newsletters, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Once identified, the NPOs' top five channels then became the focus for questions on frequency of use and strategic purpose, and further discussion was undertaken to uncover how and why these channels are preferred by these New Zealand NPOs. Each interview was transcribed and the data coded through the *HyperRESEARCH* software tool to help analyse the communication practitioners' perspective on their digital communication in terms of stakeholder engagement (Frey et al., 2000).

6.1 Qualitative Analysis: Interview Data

6.1.1 Assessing digital channel use by New Zealand NPOs

At the beginning of each interview, communication practitioners from the 20 participating New Zealand NPOs were asked to name which of the listed digital channels they currently use to communicate with their stakeholders, volunteers and/or donors. The list included websites, Facebook, LinkedIn, blogs, Twitter, YouTube, e-newsletters, and Instagram. These eight digital

channels have all been promoted in previous studies to a varying degree, either individually or in smaller select channel groups, as channels to help NPOs achieve dialogic and strategic purposes. However, in the literature review a gap was identified regarding whether, and/or how NPOs use specific or multiple channels to achieve the strategic purpose of stakeholder engagement.

Interestingly, 80% ($n=16$) of the New Zealand NPOs report using at least five of the eight digital channels considered as part of this research. Of the 20 communication practitioners interviewed, just 10% ($n=2$) of the NPOs (Org4 and Org10) use all eight of the listed digital channels. This is followed closely by 25% ($n=5$) of the NPOs (Org5, Org6, Org7, Org8 and Org17) using seven digital channels, 30% ($n=6$) of the NPOs (Org1, Org3, Org9, Org15, Org19 and Org20) using six of the digital channels and 15% ($n=3$) of the NPOs (Org12, Org13 and Org16) using five digital channels. Of the NPOs found to use fewer than five digital channels, 15% ($n=3$) of the NPOs (Org2, Org11, and Org14) report they use four of the eight digital channels being investigated in this study. One NPO (Org7) noted it uses just three channels, website, Facebook and e-newsletters, for online communication with its stakeholders, volunteers and donors. In total, 40% ($n=8$) of the communication practitioners mentioned additional digital channels that are used by their NPOs for communicating online. Org8 was the only NPO to mention Pinterest as an additional channel it uses. Other digital channels mentioned by the NPOs were Google Plus and Yammer specifically, and an intranet and an alternative extranet website were also mentioned.

The interview findings are summarised in Table 7.

Table 7: Digital channels used by 20 New Zealand NPOs

Org	Websites	Facebook	Twitter	Electronic Newsletters	Blogs	YouTube	Instagram	LinkedIn	Other
1	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	X
2	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	X
3	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X
4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X
7	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X
8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
9	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	X
10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
11	✓	X	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓
12	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	X
13	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	X	X
14	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	X
15	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
16	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	✓
17	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
18	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X
19	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X
20	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓

When asked if the NPOs had considered expanding their digital channels to try any additional specific channels, 25% ($n=5$) of the communication practitioners report they have considered Instagram, 15% ($n=3$) of the communication practitioners have considered LinkedIn, 10% ($n=2$) have considered Pinterest, and 10% ($n=2$) of the practitioners would like to try Snapchat in the future. However, 80% ($n=16$) of the practitioners mentioned lack of resourcing is a key issue preventing them from deploying new channels.

Time constraints are a barrier preventing the investigation or inclusion of new digital communication channels for 30% ($n=6$) of the practitioners, and 30% ($n=6$) of the research participants commented

that the dubious return on investment and/or uncertainty of engagement simply did not justify the communication practitioner putting time into developing new channels. Similarly, 30% ($n=6$) of the research participants say they are happy to stick with the mainstream digital channels they are already using, because they want to focus on what they are already doing and strengthen those channels. Org2 noted “it’s an organic thing, that’s being familiar with them and so we’ve been slower to adopt new channels”.

Doubts over appropriate content also proved to be a factor preventing consideration of more channels, with 25% ($n=5$) of the NPOs’ practitioners commenting they were unsure whether they would have enough content to deploy another channel. Lack of knowledge on how to use other channels effectively was also noted by 20% ($n=4$) of the practitioners as a key factor preventing the NPO from making any move to increase the array of channels. Another 15% ($n=3$) were unsure whether the audience reach associated with other digital channels was relevant to the organisation.

Overall, the NPOs all use multiple channels; however, websites, e-newsletters, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are significantly more popular across the whole sample. Despite the broad uptake, digital channel use is largely reliant on the practitioner’s familiarity with the channels and the NPO’s ongoing commitment to digital communication.

6.1.2 Digital channel affordances for NPOs

When asked why digital communication channels suit the NPO specifically, 70% ($n=14$) of the communication practitioners responded that digital channels are particularly beneficial to communicate and engage with a wider audience. Of those 14 NPO’s, 36% ($n=4$) stated they just cannot afford to disregard digital communication channels, and are aware of the need to keep up with technology as more and more people are looking for information and answers to their questions online.

The practitioners are all familiar with the digital channels they use, and report personal familiarity is one of the key reasons why they chose the channels. Interestingly, 20% ($n=4$) of the communication practitioners report that digital channels provide an easy option to spread messaging far and wide, as the NPO can share the same information across multiple platforms simultaneously.

To summarise, most of the practitioners appreciate that digital channels enable them to communicate far more widely and flexibly than they could via traditional communication methods.

6.1.2.1 Advantages of digital channels

All ($n=20$) of the communication practitioners consider that their digital channels offer timeliness, enabling the NPOs to communicate quickly with stakeholders/volunteers and donors, and 70% ($n=14$) of the practitioners agree that the digital communication channels provide more options for communicating in visually appealing ways. Similarly, 70% ($n=14$) of the communication practitioners commented that using digital channels for communication allows NPOs to strategically target specific stakeholders/volunteers or donors. Expressing a different perspective, Org12 reported that a single post can be created and shared across all the NPO's digital channels, which "effectively ticks all of the boxes" as a one-size-fits-all approach for its stakeholder engagement, fundraising efforts and/or to gain volunteer and donor support.

Cost-effectiveness was another key theme to emerge from the interviews with the communication practitioners, as 60% ($n=12$) consider digital channels as a more affordable means of communication in comparison with the higher cost of traditional hard copy. Org18 mentioned that the ability to target an audience directly is an advantage of using digital channels, especially in combination with the channels' cost-effectiveness.

Importantly, digital communication also provides more opportunities to encourage engagement for 60% ($n=12$) of the NPOs. Org4, Org16 and Org19 commented on the advantages of being able to embed video content into digital communication channels as a creative tool to engage with

stakeholders. A much smaller number of NPOs considered measurement and evaluation of digital channels as an advantage, with the increased ability to track and measure digital communication and engagement reported as an advantage by just 30% ($n=6$) of NPOs.

Broadly, the NPOs realise the value digital channels can provide in terms of allowing timely dissemination of communication, strategic targeting to audiences, and visually appealing content. However, it appears that only a small sample of the NPOs see value in applying evaluation and measurement to their digital channel usage to assess stakeholder engagement.

6.1.2.2 Disadvantages of digital channels

The biggest disadvantage associated with deploying digital channels reported by the NPOs' communication practitioners is that they are time consuming, with 65% ($n=13$) of the interview participants noting the considerable time investment required for monitoring and responding to messages online. Similarly, 35% ($n=7$) of the practitioners noted maintaining digital channels is resource intensive, and 30% ($n=6$) of the practitioners were concerned the constant need for monitoring and loss of control over audience response could present a considerable PR risk for NPOs. Of the New Zealand NPOs represented in this study, 30% ($n=6$) expressed concern that the messaging often gets lost amongst many other posts that appear across the digital platform they use, so NPOs are disadvantaged if they cannot afford to push the messaging out further.

During the interviews, 25% ($n=5$) of the practitioners noted digital communication is actually difficult for NPOs to use for purposes of engagement with stakeholders, simply because digital communication lacks the opportunities for face-to-face communication. One advantage of using digital channels is that it enables NPOs to be more strategic with their communication with stakeholders to target particular audience groups across specific channels, or use the digital communication to achieve a specific purpose. However, 20% ($n=4$) of the communication practitioners identified the requirement to be strategic with digital communication as a

disadvantage for NPOs because of the commitment it requires. A further disadvantage was raised by 20% ($n=4$) of the practitioners, as they also expressed concern that digital channels do not reach some audience segments (such as older or younger audiences) who may not use, or have access to, the digital channel/s the NPO is using.

The communication practitioners all reported that they are restricted financially, which affects their ability to evaluate and measure their digital communication and engagement. Further, 20% ($n=4$) of the practitioners find the free digital measurement tools very limited in the actual data they provide, making it difficult for the practitioners to report back on the return on investment (ROI). Another disadvantage reported by 15% ($n=3$) of the research participants was the increasing requirement for communication practitioners to be digitally savvy, with specific skills required to effectively manage digital communication channels. Further to those findings, Org10 specifically mentioned the difficulty it has in attracting practitioners with the appropriate skills to manage the digital channels.

Overall, practitioners were critical of the time and commitment required to create the digital communication, and then monitor and evaluate the communication. The practitioners' frustrations emerged largely from limited financial resources, time, and practitioner knowledge.

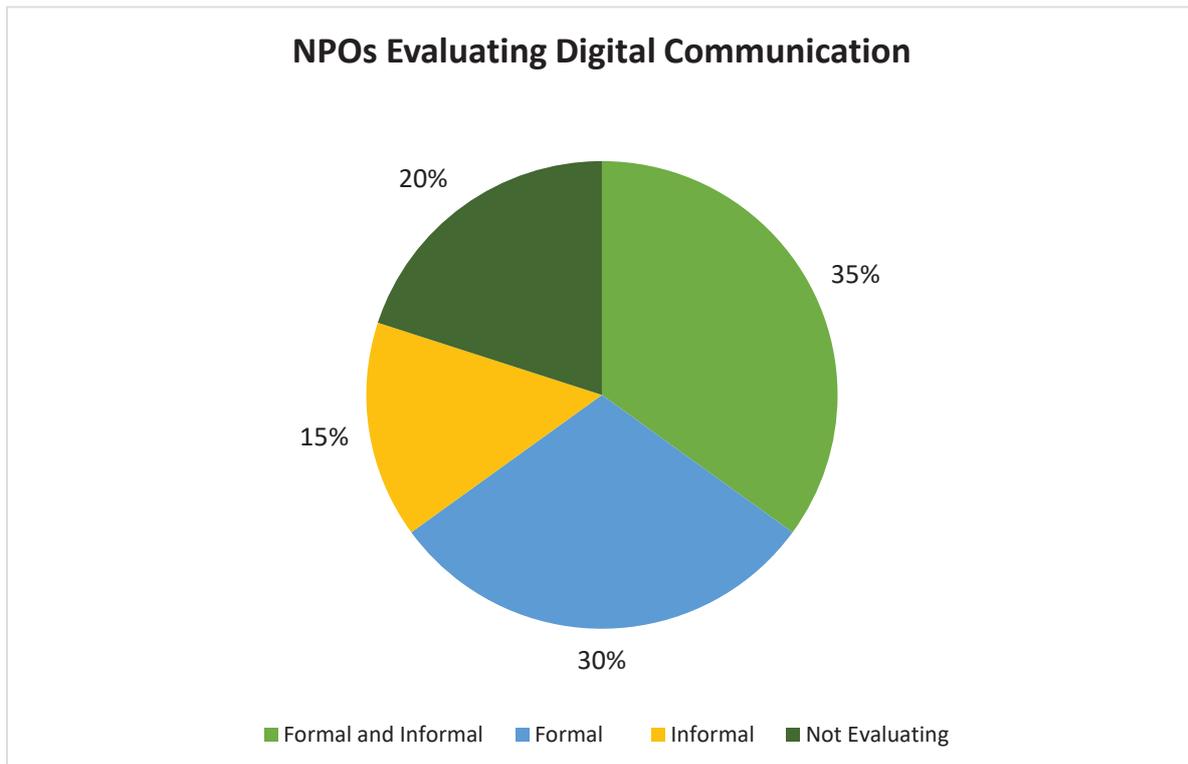
6.1.3 NPOs' evaluation/measurement of digital communication

The practitioners were asked whether they are evaluating/measuring their online communication formally or informally. Formal evaluation was defined as using analytics tools, including: automated monitoring, metrics analysis, sentiment analysis/opinion mining, and/or audience outcome measurement. Informal evaluation was defined as subjectively reviewing the communication/post delivered to assess the reach, likes/shares or comments and feedback across each channel, without a formal evaluation process or regular use of analytics or reporting tools.

Of all the communication practitioners interviewed, 35% ($n=7$) are using both formal and informal evaluation methods to track the digital communication outputs and inputs and 30% ($n=6$) are using

only formal evaluation. This is followed by 15% ($n=3$) of the research participants relying on informal evaluation alone, and 20% ($n=4$) admit they are currently not evaluating outcomes of communication through digital channels at all. These results are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Evaluation/measurement of digital channels by New Zealand NPOs



Interview participants were asked what the outcomes of evaluation/measurement mean for their NPO's ongoing digital communication. Of the 16 practitioners that do evaluate the digital channel usage, 56.25% ($n=9$) suggested evaluation provides direction for content and/or design for future campaigns and digital communication - explaining that if the communication the NPOs posted to the digital channel/s worked well, and achieved the NPOs' purpose, the practitioners could use the information gleaned through the evaluation to provide recommendations for the next digital communication campaign. Conversely, 37.5% ($n=6$) of the practitioners say it simply justifies what they currently do. While 37.5% ($n=6$) say that evaluation leads to more budget/spend allocation, just 18.75% ($n=3$) of the practitioners say evaluation outcomes lead to more resource allocation in

terms of more communication practitioner time dedicated to digital channels, and 18.75% ($n=3$) said evaluation will encourage the NPO to consider expanding online communication to try new channels, whereas just 12.5% ($n=2$) reported it would lead to more time allocated to digital channels.

When questioned on what barriers, if any, impede the NPOs' efforts to evaluate their digital channel use, 43.75% ($n=7$) of the 16 evaluating practitioners reported that acquiring knowledge of how to evaluate was a challenge, and 31.25% ($n=5$) were unsure what to do with the results to make evaluation a worthwhile activity. Org5 replied that its challenge was how to interpret the evaluation results, and how to ascertain whether online engagement does indicate real commitment from the audience. The cost associated with newer technology was a significant barrier to measuring evaluation for 25% ($n=4$) of the communication practitioners, especially with Facebook and its throttling effect on an NPO's organic reach, reducing possible engagement with a wider audience. Limited reach means lower measures to report on through the analytics, unless the NPO is prepared to work harder to create content that will lead to increased interaction, or to pay to push the post out to a wider audience.

Overall, evaluation efforts were markedly uneven across the sample, revealing ad hoc and often unstrategic efforts.

6.1.4 Feedback on NPOs' digital communication

The NPOs' communication practitioners were asked whether they had received feedback on their digital communication, and 90% ($n=18$) reported receiving regular feedback through the digital channels in the form of likes, sharing of stories and feedback on the platforms, and said the feedback can be both positive and negative. However, just 20% ($n=4$) of the communication practitioners said they regularly ask for feedback on the digital channels as part of a wider general review of their services, with 15% ($n=3$) of the NPOs responding that click throughs and analytics are the best type

of feedback. These respondents felt that the click through numbers and analytics provide a measured rate of engagement and a clearer picture of audience likes or dislikes, rather than looking directly at feedback from their audience. Of all the interview participants, 10% ($n=2$) admitted the NPO does not readily receive, nor ask for feedback on the digital channels; however, as these practitioners are still relatively new to the organisation, they are not able to fully answer the question. Finally, Org12 was the only NPO to confirm a digital survey has been completed and invited participation from its stakeholders, and the organisation is reportedly happy with the outcome, as the results provide assurance the NPO's audience is very engaged.

In conclusion, despite the practitioners' assertions they are receiving good feedback on their digital channels, most are not asking for feedback.

6.1.5 Strategies for digital communication

Each communication practitioner was asked if the NPO has a digital communication strategy to target segmented stakeholder/volunteer or donor groups using specific channels. Of the 20 NPOs interviewed, Org20 is the only NPO to currently have a digital strategy in place to ensure the online communication channels target specific stakeholder/volunteer and donor groups. Although 95% ($n=19$) say they do not have an explicit strategy, they report that they do consider the audience in each channel when designing their communication, and/or they rely on the nature of the channel to drive the messaging to their audience. However, 40% ($n=8$) of those practitioners admit they apply the same messaging across all digital platforms the NPOs use. Of the NPOs that do not have a digital strategy, 35% ($n=7$) of the practitioners mention they are either in the process of developing a strategy now, or plan to create a strategy for using multiple digital channels in the future. One example of this is a comment from Org17's communication practitioner, who admits the organisation has used its Facebook channel "for a good four years now, but there was never a

targeted approach for why the organisation delves into those channels; we are developing a digital strategy now so that we can know which audiences we are targeting and segmenting”.

Overall, most of the NPOs do not have a digital strategy in place for their digital channels, despite the fact they are already actively using multiple digital channels.

6.1.6 NPOs promoting online participation

Each practitioner was asked whether the NPO is actively promoting its digital channels as a way for stakeholders to engage with the NPO. In the interview responses, 75% ($n=15$) believe they are actively promoting online participation to their stakeholders by promoting Facebook and Twitter channels on their website or e-newsletter. The reasons the NPOs gave for promoting their digital channels included “we want specific outcomes, so we want them to see what we do so it may drive them to donate” (Org17), whereas Org18 replied it actively promotes digital channels because they are the “most current and easily accessible source of truth”. Org19 similarly responded that its digital channels are “another way that people can reach out to us if they need to”. Of the 25% ($n=5$) of practitioners that state they are not actively promoting the full suite of digital channels they currently use for communication, 10% ($n=2$) say they do display their website address on their print material and e-newsletters; they also note they would like to do more. Similarly, 10% ($n=2$) of the communication practitioner’s report that any promotion of the digital channels the NPOs use is limited.

Essentially, NPOs do believe they promote participation to stakeholders, but the collective findings also confirm the NPOs’ ad hoc approach to digital communication means they are uncertain whether their digital communication is working at all to build stakeholder relationships.

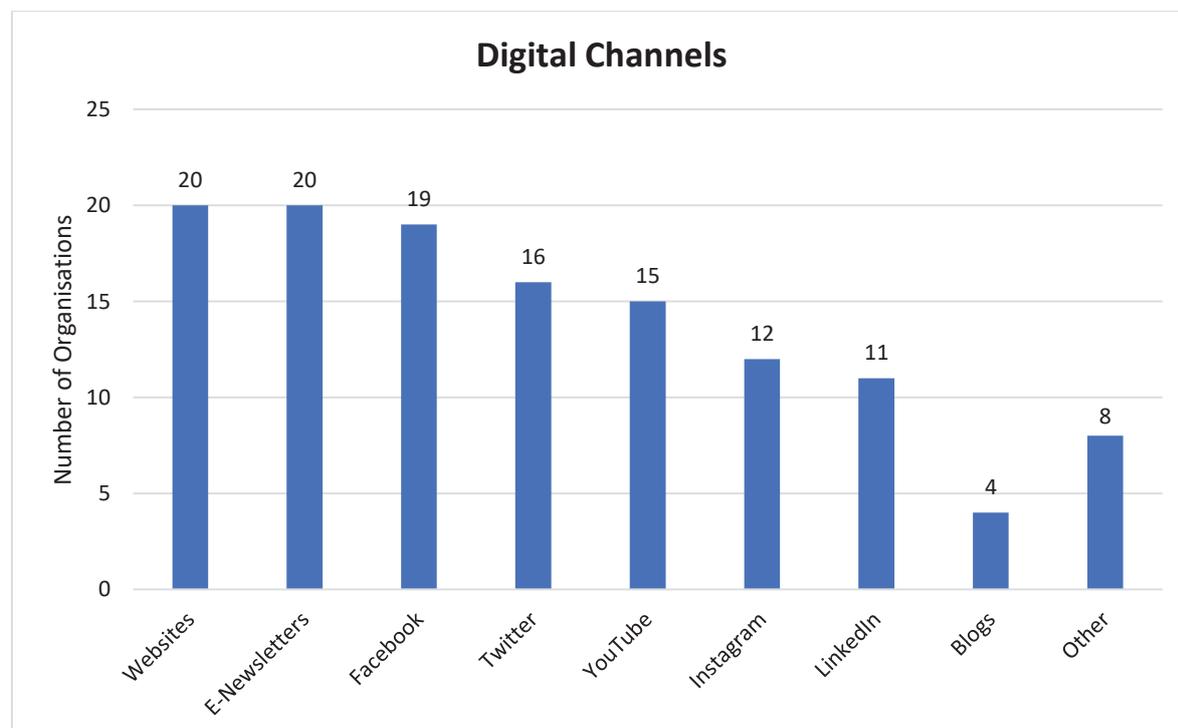
6.1.7 New Zealand NPOs' top five digital channels

Each communication practitioner was asked to name the five digital channels they use most often for stakeholder engagement, to determine the channels that New Zealand NPOs prefer, overall, for their communicative needs.

The top five most popular channels across the participating New Zealand NPOs are: websites, used by 100% ($n=20$) of the NPOs; e-newsletters, used by 100% ($n=20$) of the NPOs; Facebook, used by 95% ($n=19$) of the NPOs; Twitter, used by 80% ($n=16$) of the NPOs; and YouTube, used by 75% ($n=15$) of the NPOs. Although blogs, Instagram and LinkedIn were named in the top five most popular channels by a small number of the interview participants, there was a marked difference in overall popularity when the total number of New Zealand NPOs using each of the specified digital platforms was calculated.

The number of NPOs using each digital channel is summarised in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Digital channels used by New Zealand NPOs



6.1.8 Frequency of digital channel use

The communication practitioners were all questioned about the frequency with which they use their digital channels to communicate with stakeholders, volunteers and/or donors.

6.1.8.1 Websites

Of the 20 NPOs interviewed, all of the communication practitioners listed websites in their top five channels of choice; 36.8% ($n=7$) report that they use their websites 'as required' and 31.5% ($n=6$) said they update their websites 'daily'. Just 15.7% ($n=3$) of the practitioners add new content to engage their audiences 'weekly' and similarly just 15.7% ($n=3$) update their communication targeting stakeholders on their websites 'on a regular basis'.

6.1.8.2 E-newsletters

E-newsletters were named in the top five channels of choice for stakeholder engagement by all of the NPOs' communication practitioners. When asked how often they employ their e-newsletters to communicate with their stakeholders, 50% ($n=10$) use e-newsletters 'as required', 35% ($n=7$) send their e-newsletters out 'on a regular basis', and 15% ($n=3$) send their e-newsletters out regularly to their database, with additional e-newsletters sent out 'as required'. Org12 explained the risk of contact fatigue is a primary reason for keeping the frequency of the e-newsletters to a regular monthly schedule.

6.1.8.3 Facebook

Out of the 20 NPOs in the sample, 95% ($n=19$) use Facebook as one of the main digital channels for online communication and all have included the channel in their top five. Of those 19 NPOs, 63.1% ($n=12$) use it 'daily', 21% ($n=4$) use it 'on a regular basis', and 15.7% ($n=3$) use it 'weekly'. Org4 stated that Facebook is really its "key social media platform that it uses now".

6.1.8.4 Twitter

A total of 80% ($n=16$) of the NPOs interviewed use Twitter, with 43.7% ($n=7$) reporting that they are posting or communicating with stakeholders on the channel 'daily', 33.3% ($n=5$) using the channel 'regularly', and 13.3% ($n=2$) 'weekly'. This is followed by 13.3% ($n=2$) who communicate through Twitter 'as required'. Interestingly, of those organisations that report using Twitter, 33.3% ($n=5$) of the practitioners specifically note they do not have a strong presence across the platform. One communication practitioner would not like to grant Twitter too much importance, noting this is simply because it is under-developed as a channel by the NPO.

6.1.8.5 YouTube

Out of the 20 NPOs, 75% ($n=15$) listed YouTube in their top five digital channels. Of those fifteen NPOs, 86.6% ($n=13$) of the practitioners use the channel 'as required', and 13.3% ($n=2$) apply their communication through YouTube 'on a regular basis'. Org9 said it uses YouTube "as required and probably only one [video] a year" and Org3's communication practitioner admits "we don't leverage the channel effectively yet, but it's something we are working on."

6.1.8.6 Instagram

Instagram appeared to be under-utilised by the New Zealand non-profit sector. Out of all communication practitioners interviewed, only 39% ($n=6$) said they currently use Instagram as a communication platform to engage their audience. Of those NPOs that reported using Instagram, 66.6% ($n=4$) use Instagram 'as required', and 33.3% ($n=2$) use the channel 'weekly'. Org9 remarked that while it's aware the NPO is not using the channel to its full potential, the channel is simply not as relevant for promoting its brand as other channels, such as Facebook, which provides more options to share and respond.

6.1.8.7 LinkedIn

LinkedIn is used by 55% ($n=11$) of the 20 NPOs interviewed; however, just five NPOs named LinkedIn in their top five and commented on the frequency they use the channel for communication. Of those five NPOs, just 40% ($n=2$) are updating the content regularly. Further, of those NPOs that use the channel, but did not name it in their top five, 36.3% ($n=4$) note they do not maintain an active presence on their LinkedIn channel. One practitioner notes this is primarily because the NPO has not developed a strategy for incorporating it as a regular form of communication to reach its stakeholders. Another practitioner noted the NPO is aware LinkedIn is a useful channel, but just does not have the resources to use it. A third practitioner responded the NPO is planning to use the channel more in the future.

6.1.8.8 Blogs

Although four NPOs report they use blogs as one of their digital channels, just 10% ($n=2$) of the 20 NPOs' communication practitioners named blogs in their top five digital channels. Both organisations report that they use the channel 'as required' depending on the organisation's need to communicate, and/or on the availability of news to push out through that channel.

The frequency of digital channel use is further summarised in Table 8.

Table 8: Digital channels' frequency of use

Channel	Daily	Weekly	Regularly	As Required	Regularly and as Required
Websites (20)	35% (n=7)	15.7% (n=3)	15.7% (n=3)	31.5% (n=7)	0
E-newsletters (20)	0	0	35% (n=7)	50% (n=10)	15% (n=3)
Facebook (19)	63.1% (n=12)	15.7% (n=3)	21% (n=4)	0	0
Twitter (16)	43.7% (n=7)	13.3% (n=2)	33.3% (n=5)	13.3% (n=2)	0
YouTube (8)	0	0	12.5% (n=1)	87.5% (n=7)	0
Instagram (6)	0	33.3% (n=2)	0	66.6% (n=4)	0
LinkedIn (5)	20% (n=1)	20% (n=1)	40% (n=2)	20% (n=1)	0
Blogs (2)	0	0	0	100% (n=2)	0

To summarise, of all the digital channels assessed in this study, Facebook and Twitter appear to be the channels the NPOs use the most frequently. The results show the NPOs are not using their digital communication strategically across all of their digital channels, but may be relying on their familiarity to use the channels they know well.

6.1.9 Purpose of top five digital channels - Qualitative findings

Interview participants were asked what purpose they have for using each of their digital channels. As previously discussed, the list of strategic purposes was identified for this study from prior research, and the list was read out to the practitioners. Research participants were only asked to

identify the purpose(s) of the five digital communication channels they had each identified they use the most often to communicate with stakeholders, volunteers and/or donors.

Table 9 provides a breakdown on each channel in the study, indicating the total number of NPO responses on which each percentage result is based.

Table 9: NPOs' use of each channel – explanation of the percentage breakdown

Channels Being Assessed for NPOs' purpose(s)	Number of Orgs Naming the Channel in Top Five
Websites	20
E-newsletters	20
Facebook	19
Twitter	16
YouTube	8
Instagram	6
LinkedIn	5
Blogs	2

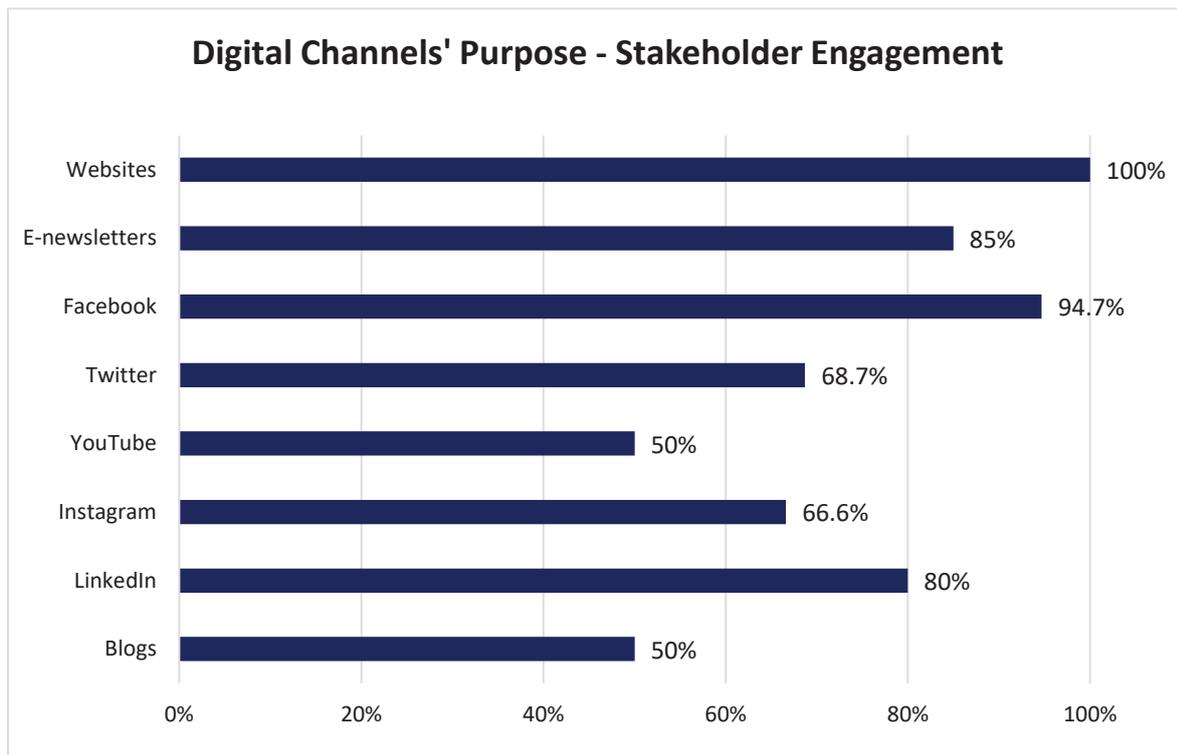
A table collating the communication practitioners' responses across all of the channel purposes is provided in Appendix D of the Appendices section of this report.

6.1.9.1 Stakeholder engagement

Of the communication practitioners interviewed, it was interesting to find that all ($n=20$) of the NPOs identified stakeholder engagement as a key purpose for using their websites. Stakeholder engagement was a purpose for 94.7% ($n=18$) of those using Facebook, 85% ($n=17$) of those using e-newsletters, 68.7% ($n=11$) of those using Twitter, and 50% ($n=4$) of those using YouTube.

The NPOs' digital channel usage for the purpose of stakeholder engagement is illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Results of interviews: digital channels and stakeholder engagement

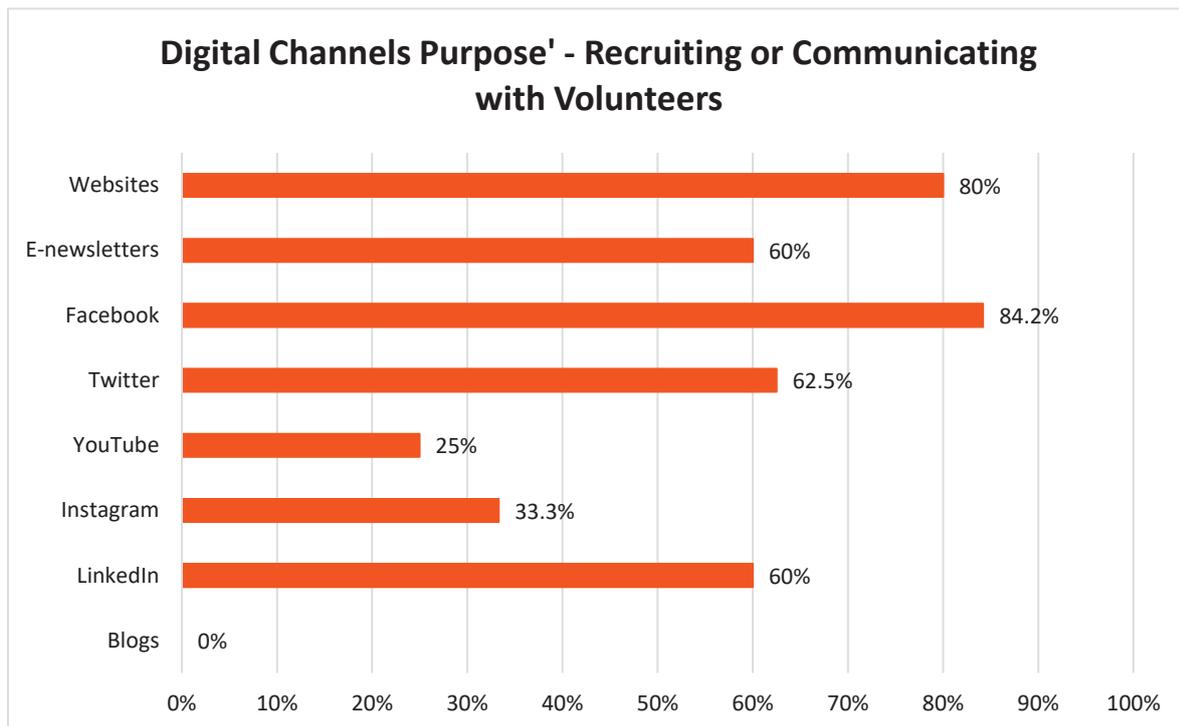


6.1.9.2 Recruiting or communicating with volunteers

The second purpose presented to the practitioners for their response was recruiting or communicating with volunteers. This was reported to be a key purpose for using websites by 80% ($n=16$), e-newsletters by 60% ($n=12$), Facebook by 84.2% ($n=16$), Twitter by 62.5% ($n=10$), and YouTube by 25% ($n=2$) of the communication practitioners.

The NPOs' digital channel usage for the purpose of recruiting or communicating with volunteers is illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Results of interviews: digital channels and recruiting or communicating with volunteers

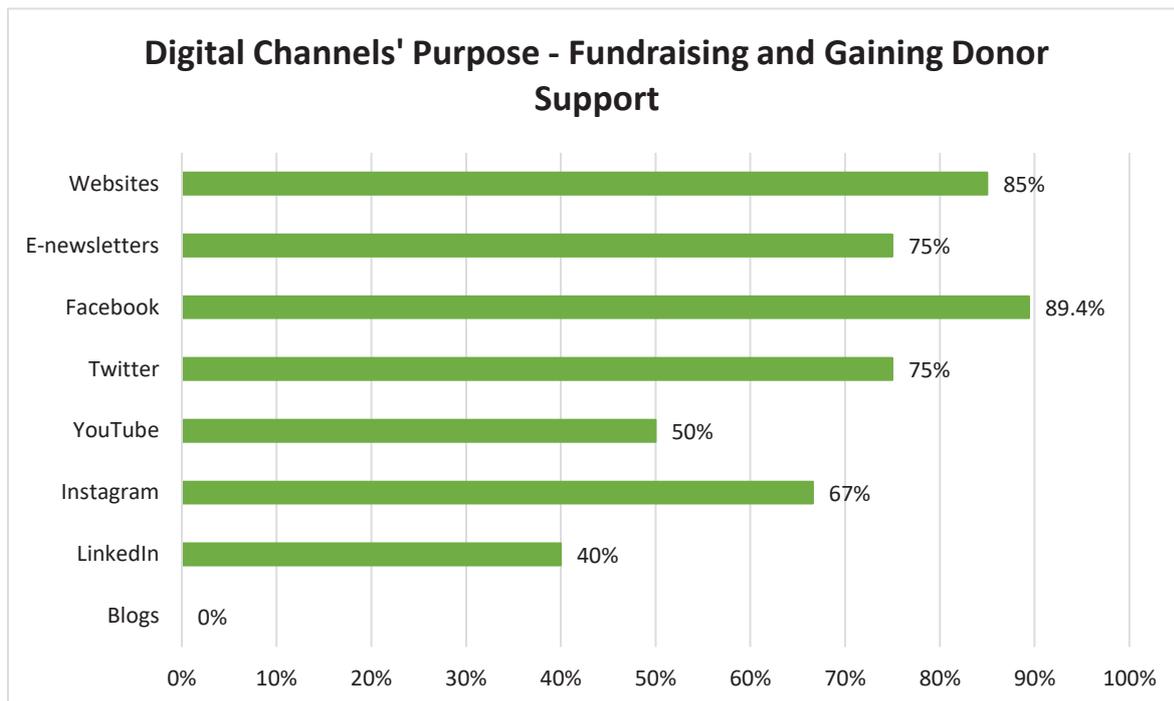


6.1.9.3 Fundraising and gaining donor support

Fundraising and gaining donor support was identified as a key purpose for websites by 85% ($n=17$), for e-newsletters by 75% ($n=15$), for Facebook by 89.4% ($n=17$), for Twitter by 75% ($n=12$), and for YouTube by 50% ($n=4$) of interview participants.

The NPOs' digital channel usage for the purpose of fundraising and gaining donor support is illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Results of interviews: digital channels and fundraising and donor support

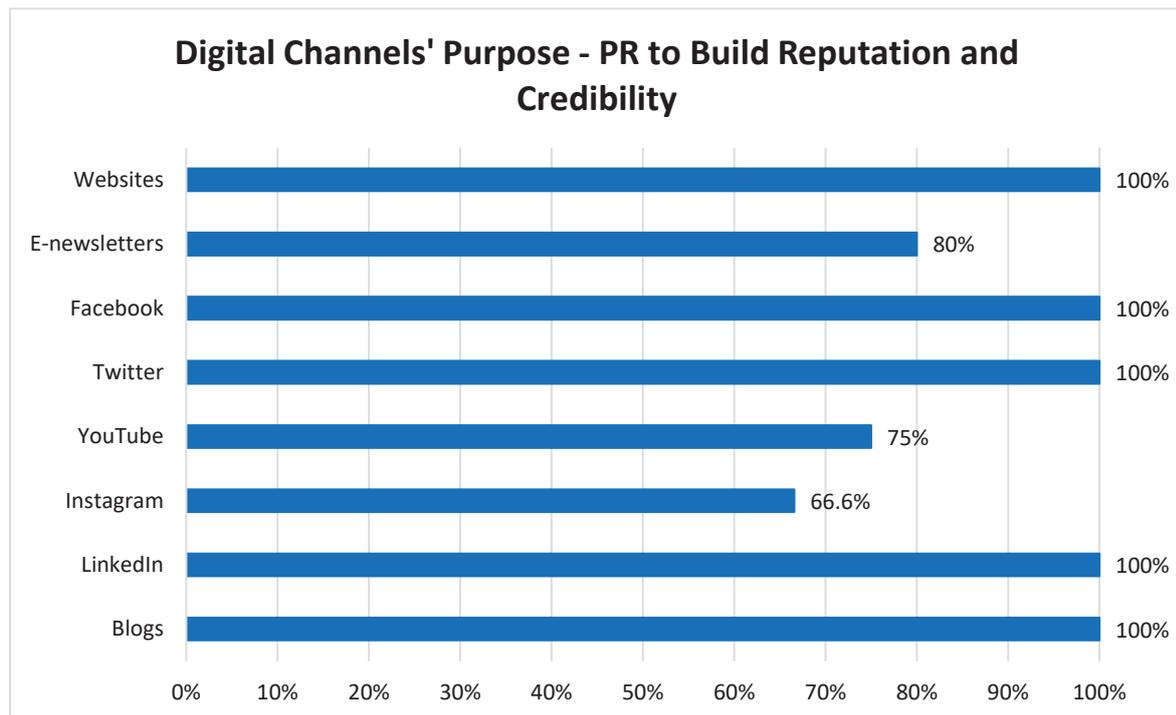


6.1.9.4 PR to build reputation and credibility

From the entire list of purposes for digital communication, the practitioner interviews produced the most consistent data, across the digital channels, identifying 'PR to build reputation and credibility' as a key purpose for the NPOs' digital channel use. PR was named as a purpose for using websites by 100% ($n=20$), for Facebook by 100% ($n=19$), and for Twitter by 100% ($n=16$) of the NPOs' interview respondents. Of the remaining channels, PR was reported as a purpose for e-newsletters by 80% ($n=16$), and YouTube by 75% ($n=6$) of the New Zealand NPOs.

The NPOs' digital channel usage for the purpose of PR to build reputation and credibility is illustrated in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Results of interviews: digital channels and PR

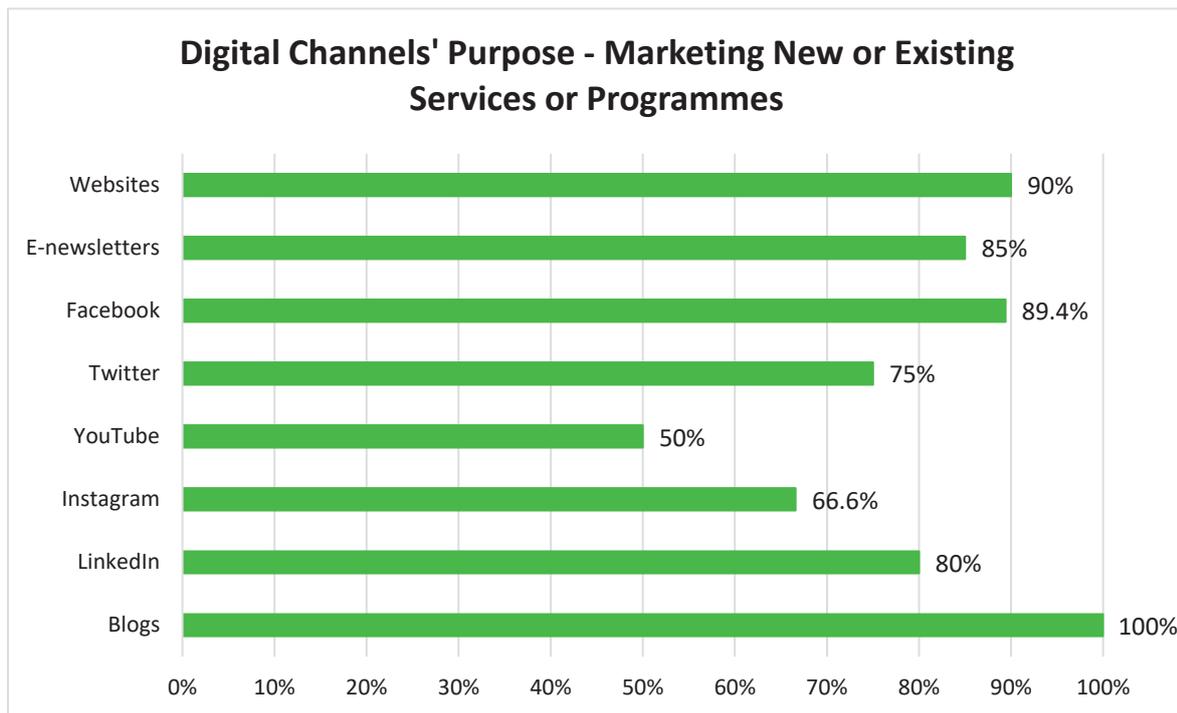


6.1.9.5 Marketing new or existing services or programmes

Results of the interviews with communication practitioners indicate that NPOs consider their blog, website, and e-newsletters as the preferred digital channels for marketing new or existing services or programmes. Of the responses given, 100% ($n=2$) use blogs, 90% ($n=18$) use websites, and 85% ($n=17$) use e-newsletters for marketing purposes. This was followed by 89.4% ($n=17$) of the NPOs using Facebook and 75% ($n=12$) of NPOs using Twitter as a marketing tool. Only 50% ($n=4$) of NPOs use YouTube for marketing purposes.

The NPOs' digital channel usage for marketing new or existing services or programmes is illustrated in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Results of interviews: digital channels for marketing

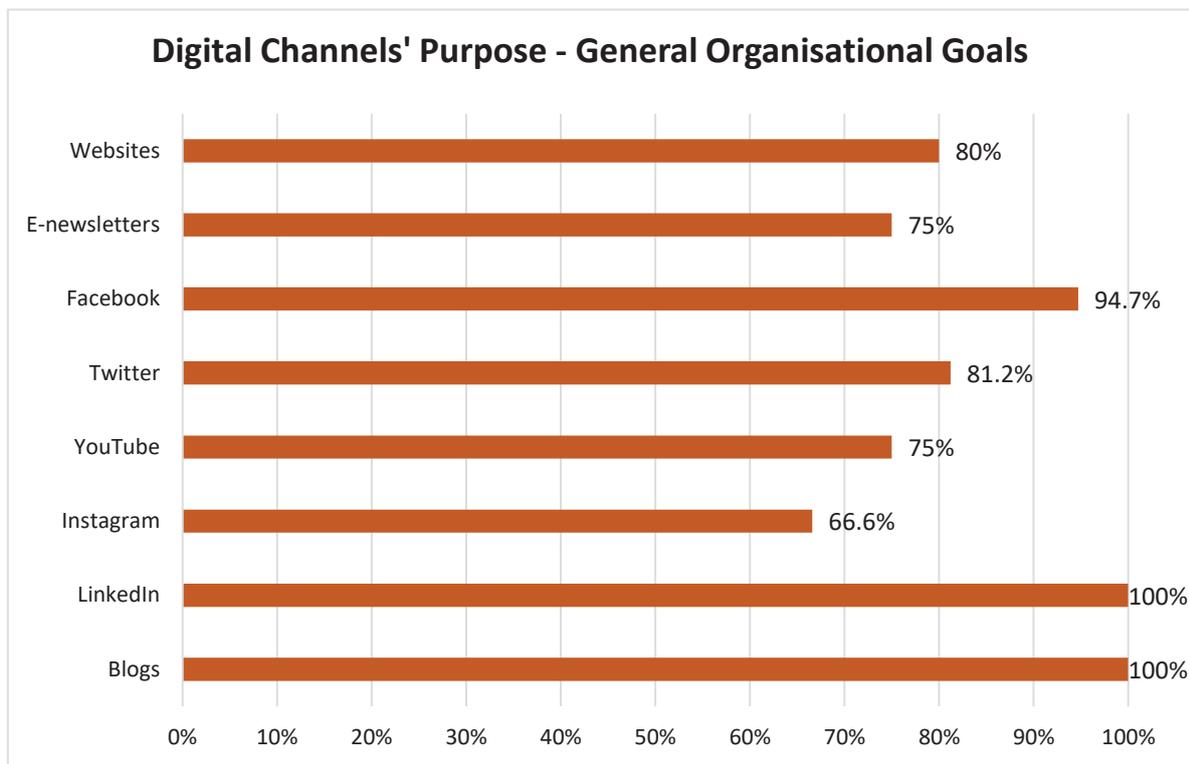


6.1.9.6 General organisational goals such as advocacy or campaigning

When communication practitioners were asked if they use their digital channels for the purposes of promoting their general organisational goals to their stakeholders, volunteers or donors, 100% ($n=2$) of NPOs use their blog, 100% ($n=5$) of NPOs use LinkedIn and 94.7% ($n=18$) of NPOs use Facebook for this purpose. This was followed by 80% ($n=16$) of NPOs using their website, 81.2% ($n=13$) of NPOs using Twitter, 75% ($n=15$) using e-newsletters, and 75% ($n=6$) of NPOs using YouTube to promote general organisational goals.

The NPOs' digital channel usage for general organisational goals such as advocacy or campaigning is illustrated in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Results of interviews: digital channels and general organisational goals



Based on the interview responses, the communication practitioners report they are using all of their digital channels for multiple purposes, although they are using websites and e-newsletters for the greatest number of purposes. Because most of the NPOs do not have a strategy in place, nor emphasise strategic use of digital communication, they appear to be attempting to use most channels to achieve (nearly) everything.

6.1.10 Impact of digital channels on stakeholder relationships

The practitioners were asked to explain how using digital channels overall impacts on their organisation's relationship with its variety of stakeholders. Of the 20 practitioners interviewed, 35% ($n=7$) used the word 'positive' to describe the impact of digital channels on the NPO's relationships with stakeholders, volunteers and donors. A further 25% ($n=5$) remarked that they cannot afford not to be in the digital space: it is simply the place to be if the organisation wants to increase the

engagement with stakeholders. Org12 mentioned digital communication provides an overt way for it to thank partners and sponsors.

In answering the question about impact, 60% ($n=12$) of the practitioners mentioned the impact of digital channels was increased visibility for their stakeholders across multiple channels, providing a means by which the NPO could be seen to say thanks to volunteers, promote their campaign, or prompt their audience to act on a direct donation ask. Org18 was the only NPO to directly mention the impact of using digital channels was increased participation on the part of the stakeholders.

A more detailed list of reported impacts described through the interviews is provided in Table 10.

Table 10: Impact of digital channels on stakeholder, volunteer and donor relationships

Impact	Number of NPOs
Improved stakeholder relationships through easier access/information	35% ($n=7$)
Improved timeframes for delivering strategic communication	30% ($n=6$)
Increased engagement by volunteers and donors	45% ($n=9$)
Increased visibility across multiple digital channels	60% ($n=12$)
Improved participation in communication with stakeholders	5% ($n=1$)
Increased donations/fundraising actions from each request	40% ($n=8$)
Increased reach across a wider audience	35% ($n=7$)
Increased awareness of the NPO's purpose for each campaign	30% ($n=6$)
Improved access for stakeholders to contact the NPO	40% ($n=8$)

Overall, the greatest impact of digital channel use for NPOs appears to be increased visibility; however, the results suggest that not all NPOs realise the value that digital channels can have for stakeholder-organisation relationships or increased participation with stakeholders.

6.2 Quantitative Results: Content Analysis Data

6.2.1 Analysing digital channel use by New Zealand NPOs

The purpose of the content analysis was, by examining the communication being produced on each of the organisations' channels, to identify how each of the participating New Zealand NPOs is using its digital channels to reach audiences, and further to provide data with which to consider whether each is using those channels effectively for engagement and identify if any disparities exist between the NPOs' stated goals for the digital channels and the actuality of the channels' usage. To produce insights that were discrete and targeted, in light of the range of channels used by the participating New Zealand NPOs, the content analysis was narrowed to focus on five New Zealand NPOs, each representing a different non-profit sector. As mentioned in the methodology section, the 20 participating NPOs were selected from a list on *The Charities Register (2016)*. The NPOs were asked to provide a copy of their most recent e-newsletter and the first five NPOs to provide a copy of their e-newsletter became part of the content analysis sample. The NPOs overall identified the five most popular channels to be websites, e-newsletters, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube: these are the channels selected for the content analysis.

Table 11 provides a list of the five participating NPOs and the sectors they represent.

Table 11: NPO subjects of content analysis of digital channels

NPO	Sectors
Org4	International Aid
Org5	Education/Training and Research
Org16	Environment
Org19	Social Services
Org20	Disability

The parameters for the content analysis were selected to examine how the five NPOs are using these five channels to engage with their stakeholders, as well as to assess how digital channels are being used to achieve purposes of: PR; marketing; advocacy or campaigning; and volunteer or donor recruitment and support (provided in Section 5.2).

6.2.1.1 New Zealand NPOs' use of websites

A screenshot was taken of each NPO's website landing page. It was assessed to identify if the organisation promoted any of the other digital channels that the organisation uses for strategic digital communication. Then it was assessed to see if the NPO is using its website channel for stakeholder, volunteer and/or donor engagement, and/or stakeholder participation or promotion.

Of the websites analysed, 100% ($n=5$) displayed links to at least two of their other digital channels on their landing page. Org16 displayed its Facebook feed and Twitter feed on its landing page and Org19 had links placed on the top and bottom of its page, as well as in the centre of the page. Org20 promoted the most digital channels, with links to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube.

Similarly, 100% ($n=5$) of the NPOs included contact information or links to email the NPO, although Org16 did not provide a phone number on its landing page.

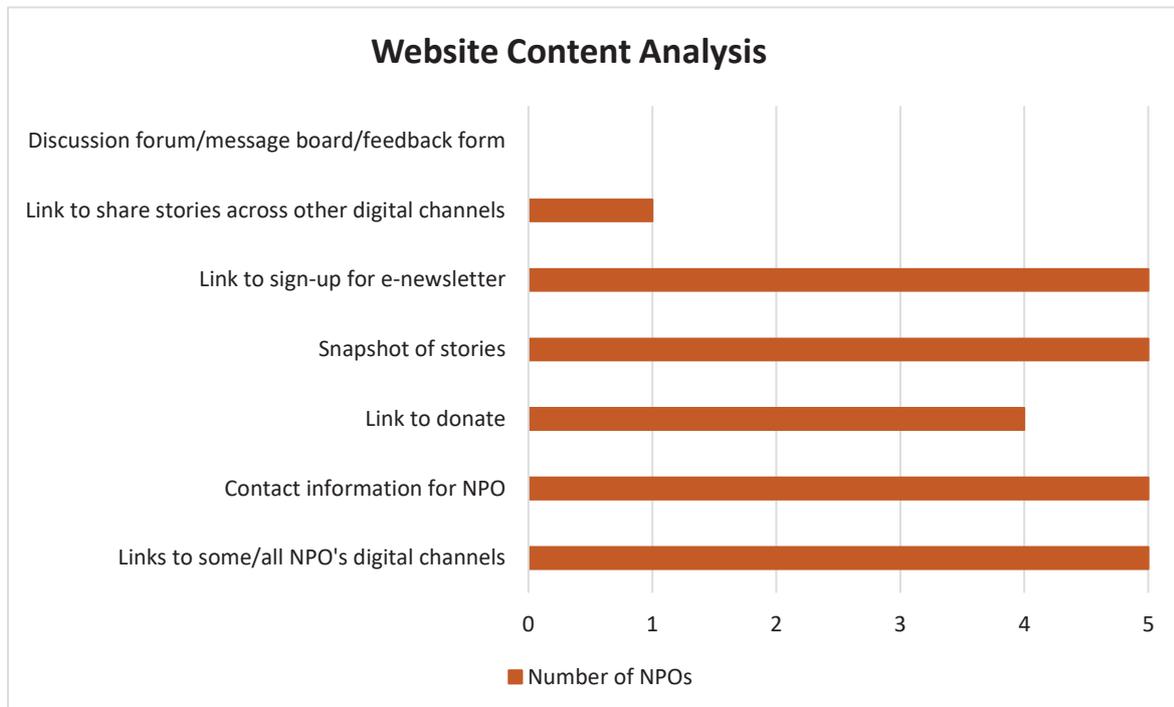
Out of the five websites, 80% ($n=4$) included a link to donate or a donate ask on their landing page.

A snapshot of stories was provided on 100% ($n=5$) of the NPOs' website landing pages with an image and links to push the viewer further into the website platform.

Although the communication practitioners consider websites ideal for stakeholder engagement and participation, none of the NPOs' website landing pages analysed for this study demonstrated stakeholder engagement (as per Figure 9), which shows that none of the NPOs provided a discussion forum, message board or feedback form, nor did they provide any other opportunities for participation.

The NPOs' website landing page analysis is illustrated in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Results of content analysis: website landing pages



6.2.1.2 New Zealand NPOs' use of e-newsletters

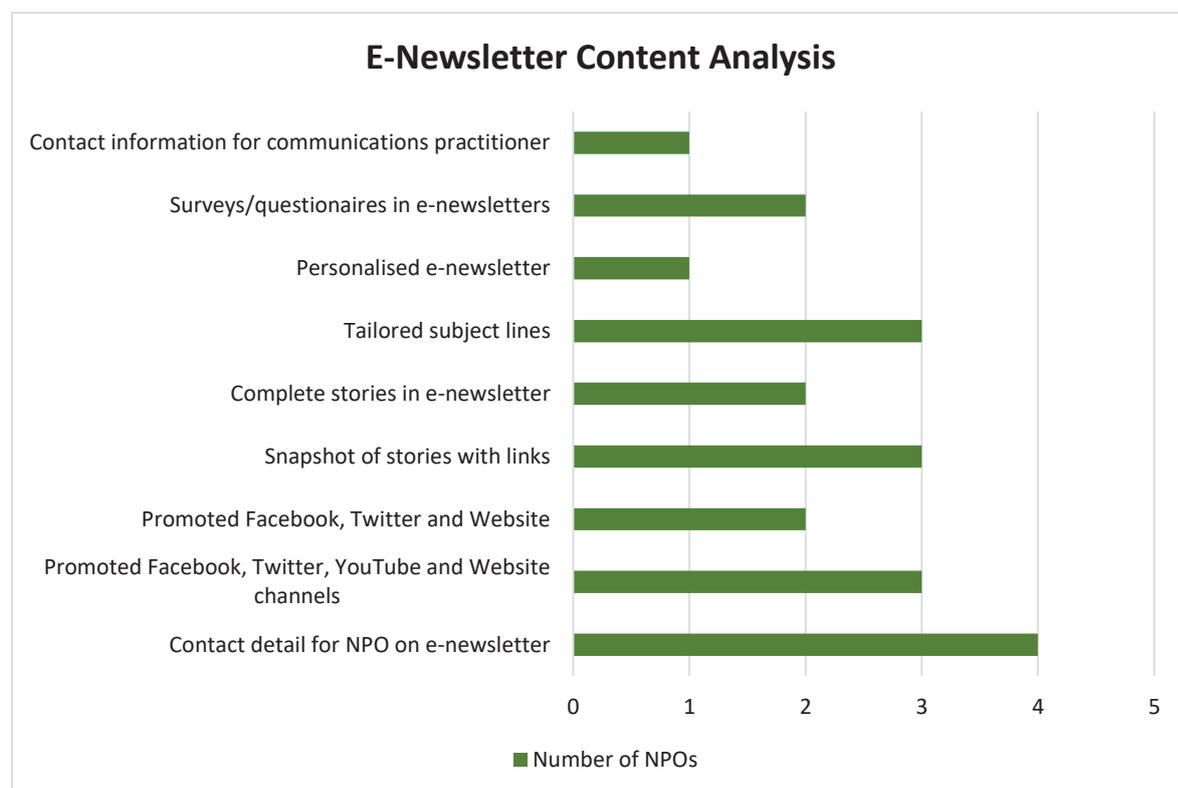
All of the five NPOs that provided a copy of their most recent e-newsletter used their e-newsletters to connect readers to other digital communication channels. Of the e-newsletters supplied for review, 60% ($n=3$) of the NPOs promoted their Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and website channels through their e-newsletter channel. The remaining 40% ($n=2$) of the NPOs promoted Facebook, Twitter and website channels, and included a link for the recipient to forward the e-newsletter on to a friend to extend the e-newsletter channel reach. Most of the NPOs appear to provide contact details for their organisations on their e-newsletter, with 80% ($n=4$) providing either a mailing address, email address or contact phone number. However, Org20 did not have any contact information on its e-newsletter. A snapshot of stories was provided by 60% ($n=3$) of the NPOs, with links to drive the audience to the full content on the NPO's website. Alternately, 40% ($n=2$) included

complete stories in their e-newsletter channel, of which Org5 also provided a link to entice the reader to read more stories on the NPO's website. The subject lines of 60% ($n=3$) of the NPOs' e-newsletters were tailored to be relevant to the campaign/topical content promoted in the e-newsletter, and Org4 had personalised its e-newsletter addressing the recipient in the body of the e-newsletter. Out of the e-newsletters analysed, 40% ($n=2$) of the NPOs provided opportunities for dialogic communication in the form of surveys/questionnaires, and Org20 invited readers to contact the communication practitioner directly by providing its contact information in the body of the e-newsletter.

The results show that the NPOs are still not all using their e-newsletters effectively to encourage dialogic communication or engagement. Of all of the channels, the e-newsletter contains the most links to other digital channels; however, the channel use is still limited.

The NPOs' e-newsletter channel analysis is illustrated in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Results of content analysis: e-newsletter channel



6.2.1.3 New Zealand NPOs' use of Facebook

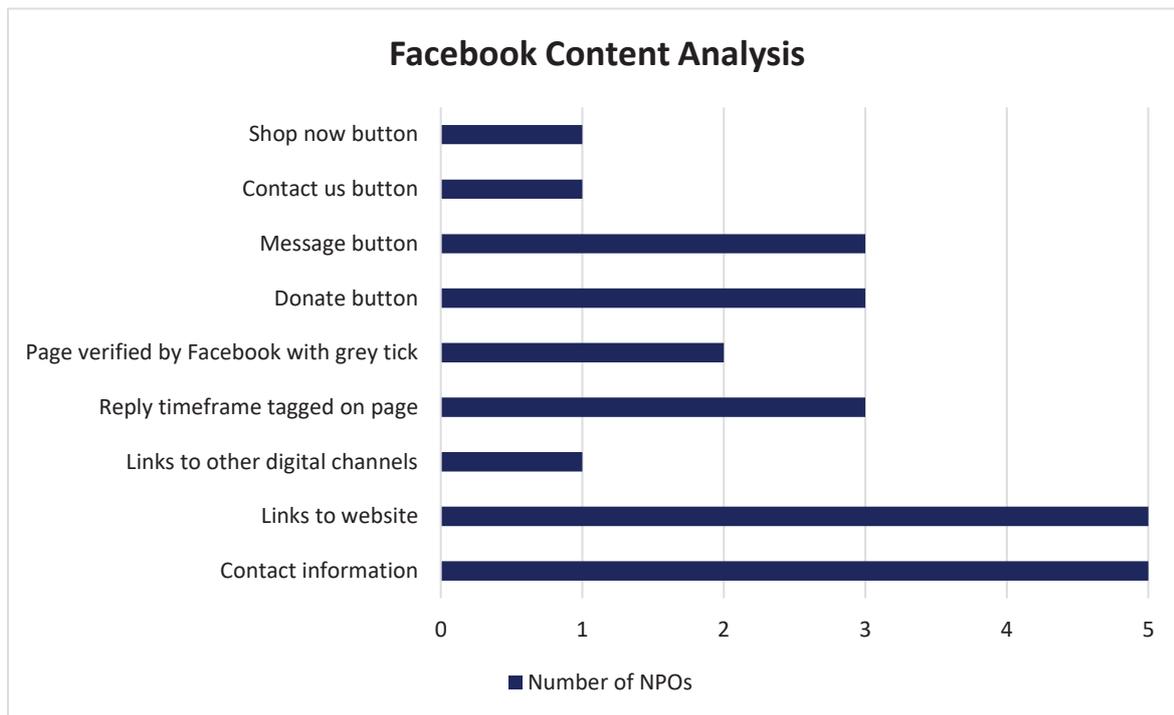
Each NPO's Facebook platform was analysed, along with the posts to the page over fourteen consecutive days. All five NPOs provided contact information for the NPO, with phone and email information provided on each organisation's main Facebook platform. Similarly, 100% ($n=5$) provided links on their Facebook page to drive the audience to their website landing page. However, Org16 was the only NPO to include a link to Twitter on its Facebook platform. Of the five participating organisations 60% ($n=3$) of the NPOs have added a reply timeframe tag to their page: Org4 and Org19 "typically replies in a day", and Org20 "typically replies in a few hours".

Just 40% ($n=2$) of the NPOs have 'grey tick' organisation verified badges next to the NPO's organisation name on the Facebook page, to assure the audience the page is the NPO's authentic voice. Of the NPOs' Facebook pages assessed in the content analysis, 60% ($n=3$) had a donate button at the top of the Facebook page and 60% ($n=3$) included a message button to encourage dialogue. Org19 included a 'contact us' button and Org16 had a 'shop now' button to drive the audience through to its website for to achieve a marketing purpose. Org5 and Org16 and Org20 use hashtags in the Facebook posts to tie conversations to past posts/appeals.

Overall, there was considerable variety in the content on the NPOs' Facebook pages; however, the practitioners appear to struggle to provide content that will encourage stakeholder participation, for example through invitations to contact the organisation.

The NPOs' Facebook page analysis is illustrated in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Results of content analysis: Facebook page and 14 days of posts



6.2.1.4 New Zealand NPOs' use of Twitter

Each NPO's Twitter channel was analysed, as well as fourteen days of tweets and retweets. Of the participating NPOs, just one (Org16) promoted both its website and Facebook channel via Twitter, while 80% ($n=4$) only promoted one other channel via Twitter, with a link to click through to their website. Org16 was the only NPO to comment on a tweet on its Twitter channel over the 14 days analysed, has the most followers ($n=9421$). Of the 14 days that Twitter posts were analysed across the five NPOs, Org16 tweeted the most with 64 tweets and 59 retweets. However, despite having a smaller follower base than Org16, Org4 managed to get a higher number of likes ($n=239$) and shares ($n=235$) on the four tweets the NPO posted over the 14 days. Org4 notably has the lowest number of followers ($n=1097$) of the entire analysis segment group, yet the NPO does follow a larger number of Twitter user profiles ($n=1518$) compared to Org16 (which follows 1026). Org16 and Org4 also had the most shares across the retweets the NPOs posted to their Twitter channel, with Org16 achieving 4305 shares across 59 retweets and Org4 achieving 3424 shares across 11 retweets.

Based on the analysis criteria, Org4 and Org16 appear to be the most active on Twitter, but across all of the participating NPOs, engagement with stakeholders, in terms of the NPOs' responses to stakeholder comments on posts, was limited.

The NPOs' Twitter page analysis is illustrated in Table 12.

Table 12: Results of content analysis: Twitter channel and 14 days of posts

Twitter Analysis Criteria	Org4	Org5	Org16	Org19	Org20
Links to NPO's digital channels	1	1	2	1	1
Followers	1097	1295	9421	1352	1248
NPO following on Twitter	1518	299	1026	1912	1030
Tweets by NPO	4	5	64	5	7
Retweets by NPO	11	0	59	0	4
Likes on NPO's post	239	1	230	9	11
Likes on retweets	3410	0	5580	0	14
Shares of NPO's posts	235	1	172	5	6
Shares of retweets	3424	0	4305	0	7
Responses from Org to comments on posts	0	0	1	0	0

6.2.1.5 New Zealand NPOs' use of YouTube

Of the five NPOs, 60% ($n=3$) provided links on YouTube to drive followers to the NPO's website; however, none of the NPOs provided links on YouTube to any of the other digital channels they use. Org16 has the highest number of subscribers to its channel ($n=151$), followed by Org20 ($n=113$), Org4 ($n=85$), Org5 ($n=47$), and finally Org19 with the lowest number ($n=9$) of subscribers. Overall, Org4 has uploaded the highest total number of videos ($n=87$) to its YouTube channel, followed by Org5 ($n=53$), Org16 ($n=32$), Org19 ($n=27$), and Org20 ($n=17$). A screenshot was taken of the NPOs last video upload to the YouTube channel and this was used as a consistent point of analysis. Org5's last video post reached the highest number of views ($n=4617$), and received six likes and three

dislikes to the post. Org4's video upload received the second highest number of views ($n=269$) and one like on the post, followed by Org19's ($n=101$) video upload views. Although Org16 had a low number of views to its post ($n=55$), the NPO received one like on the post, followed by Org19 with the lowest number of views ($n=10$) and no likes or engagement on the post.

In summary, YouTube use by the NPOs is scattered. All of the NPOs' communication practitioners post videos and share videos, but the use of the channel is fragmented.

The NPOs' YouTube channel analysis is illustrated in Table 13.

Table 13: Results of content analysis: YouTube channel and most recent video post

YouTube Analysis Criteria	Org4	Org5	Org16	Org19	Org20
Subscribers to channel	85	47	151	9	113
Links to NPO's other channels	1	1	0	0	1
Total number of video uploads	87	53	32	27	17
Date of last video upload	June 2016	Aug 2016	Sept 2016	Oct 2016	April 2016
Views of most recent video post	269	4617	55	10	101
Likes on most recent video post	1	6	1	0	0
Dislikes on most recent video post	0	3	0	0	0

6.2.2 Purpose of top five digital channels – Content analysis findings

The NPOs' digital channels were all assessed to identify whether the purpose of the communication content posted on each of the channels (between 29 September 2016 and 12 October 2016) by the organisations was targeted at one or more of the key strategic priorities: stakeholder engagement; recruiting or communicating with volunteers; fundraising and donor support; PR to build reputation and credibility; marketing new or existing services or programmes; and/or general organisational goals such as advocacy or campaigning.

6.2.2.1 Stakeholder engagement

The NPOs' digital channels were analysed to identify if each channel (and, where relevant, post) is used for stakeholder engagement, which was measured for the purposes of this study by responses to posts, or invitations posted to the channel/s inviting stakeholders to provide feedback. The analysis segment on NPOs' use of Facebook for stakeholder engagement found Org16 responded to comments on three of its posts, Org20 responded to comments on two of its Facebook posts, and Org4 and Org5 each responded to just one post.

Org20 was the only NPO to promote stakeholder engagement through its e-newsletter channel, inviting its e-newsletter recipients to email the organisation's communication practitioner with any feedback on the e-newsletter content. This NPO also included a link for stakeholders to share the e-newsletter across Facebook, Twitter and/or forward to a friend by email. The NPOs' websites do not provide an opportunity for stakeholders to engage directly with the organisation through the digital channel, despite the communication practitioners' assertions that they do use the website for stakeholder participation and engagement.

During the content analysis of the Twitter channel, the NPOs' engagement on tweets or retweets was nil, as none of the NPOs replied to any comments on the channel. Therefore, the analysis findings of Twitter channel use by the NPOs confirm the research participants did not include stakeholder engagement in their channel purpose, at least for the period under examination. Similarly, in the YouTube channel analysis segment, none of the NPOs responded to viewer comments. This finding shows the participating NPOs did not use the channel for stakeholder engagement for the period under examination.

To obtain quantitative results on the NPOs purpose for using the channels, the website landing page, the e-newsletter contents, and the YouTube most recent video upload was analysed, and counted as 'nil' findings for no stakeholder engagement on the page/newsletter/video, or 'one' if evidence of

stakeholder engagement was found. Additionally, the Facebook and Twitter channel and post analysis assessed 14 days of posts and counted each post that included comments, to count a total number of posts where the channel/s promoted stakeholder engagement through NPO's responses to comments (regardless of whether it was one response or more).

Table 14 provides findings of the NPOs' digital channels analysis showing the total count, (per website landing page, e-newsletter, YouTube upload, and/or per post over 14 days on Facebook and Twitter) of instances of stakeholder engagement.

Table 14: Results of content analysis: NPOs' purpose of stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder Engagement	Org4	Org5	Org16	Org19	Org20
Website (count of landing page)	0	0	0	0	0
E-newsletters (count of most recent e-news)	0	0	0	0	1
Facebook (count of posts over 14 days)	1	1	3	0	2
Twitter (count of posts over posts over 14 days)	0	0	0	0	0
YouTube (count of most recent video post)	0	0	0	0	0

6.2.2.2 Recruiting or communicating with volunteers

Each digital channel was assessed to identify if the NPOs use it to promote the recruitment of volunteers, or undertake two-way communication with volunteers. Org4 was the only NPO to use its Twitter channel to recruit or communicate with volunteers. Similarly, Org20 was the only NPO to use its e-newsletter to recruit volunteers. Recruitment or communicating with volunteers does not appear to be a focus for the NPOs' websites. They do not present information on volunteering, or the work that their volunteers do, on the landing page. Although 40% ($n=2$) of the NPOs have links on the website for the public to click on if they are interested in getting involved with work the NPO does, they do not specify volunteerism directly. Similar results were found on Facebook, as no posts, by any of the NPOs, promote recruitment or communication with volunteers on the channel.

Finally, none of the NPOs use the YouTube video included in the research segment to recruit or communicate with volunteers.

Table 15 provides findings of the NPOs' digital channels analysis showing the total count, (per website landing page, e-newsletter, YouTube upload, and/or per post over 14 days on Facebook and Twitter) of efforts towards recruiting or communicating with volunteers.

Table 15: Results of content analysis: NPOs' purpose of recruiting or communicating with volunteers

Recruiting or Communicating with Volunteers	Org4	Org5	Org16	Org19	Org20
Website (count of landing page)	0	0	0	0	0
E-newsletters (count of most recent e-news)	0	0	0	0	1
Facebook (count of posts over 14 days)	0	0	0	0	0
Twitter (count of posts over 14 days)	1	0	0	0	0
YouTube (count of most recent video post)	0	0	0	0	0

6.2.2.3 Fundraising and donor support

To identify if the NPOs use their digital channels for the purposes of fundraising and gaining donor support, the content analysis included assessing the content and/or posts of each of the NPO's digital channels. Of the participating organisations, 80% ($n=4$) use their website for fundraising and/or donor support, with Org4, Org5, Org19 and Org20 including a specific donation ask on their website channel's landing page. Facebook was used for the purposes of fundraising and donor support by 60% ($n=3$) of the NPOs, with Org5, Org16 and Org20 all including posts promoting fundraising or asking for donations, and Org20 doing so prolifically. Out of the five NPOs, 60% ($n=3$) have used Twitter during the analysis period for fundraising and seeking donor support; Org4 asked for donations through one tweet, Org5 through two tweets, and Org20 through six tweets over the 14-day research period. Of the NPOs, 20% ($n=2$) use their e-newsletter channel for the purposes of gaining donation support; Org4 promoted its donation campaign and Org16 included a 'donate now'

link in its e-newsletter. Org4 was the only NPO to use YouTube for the strategic purpose of gaining donation support during the analysis period, as the video posted to the channel by the NPO promoted its fundraising campaign and provided a link to donate.

Table 16 provides findings of the NPOs' digital channels analysis showing the total count, (per website landing page, e-newsletter, YouTube upload, and/or per post over 14 days on Facebook and Twitter) of requests for fundraising and gaining donor support.

Table 16: Results of content analysis: NPOs' purpose of fundraising and gaining donor support

Fundraising and Gaining Donor Support	Org4	Org5	Org16	Org19	Org20
Website (count of landing page)	1	1	1	0	1
E-newsletters (count of most recent e-news)	1	1	1	0	0
Facebook (count of posts over 14 days)	0	2	1	0	20
Twitter (count of posts over 14 days)	1	2	0	0	6
YouTube (count of most recent video post)	1	0	0	0	0

6.2.2.4 PR to build reputation and credibility

During the research period, each channel and the NPOs' posts were analysed to see if the channel included news items, sharing of success and/or sharing of knowledge to fulfil a purpose of PR: to build the NPO's reputation and credibility. Of the NPOs included in the research segment, 100% (n=5) used their website channel for PR to build credibility through shared stories, knowledge and news. Similarly, 100% (n=5) of the participating NPOs used Facebook for PR purposes. Twitter was used for PR purposes by 80% (n=4) of the NPOs: by Org4, Org16, Org19 and Org20; and Org16 had the highest count of tweets (31 in total) by the NPO that were categorised as meeting a PR purpose. Similarly, the e-newsletter content analysis revealed 80% (n=4) of the NPO's used PR as a purpose: Org4, Org5, Org19 and Org20 promoted their work and/or shared knowledge to build reputation and

prove they are credible NPOs. Of all the channels the YouTube channel was used the least for PR purposes; just 40% ($n=2$) of the NPOs, through Org19 and Org20's video uploads.

Table 17 provides findings of the NPOs' digital channels analysis showing the total count, (per website landing page, e-newsletter, YouTube upload, and/or per post over 14 days on Facebook and Twitter) for PR.

Table 17: Results of content analysis: NPOs' purpose of PR to build reputation and credibility

PR to Build Reputation and credibility	Org4	Org5	Org16	Org19	Org20
Website (count of landing page)	1	1	1	1	1
E-newsletters (count of most recent e-news)	1	1	0	1	1
Facebook (count of posts over 14 days)	6	2	8	3	2
Twitter (count of posts over 14 days)	8	0	31	2	5
YouTube (count of most recent video post)	0	0	0	1	1

6.2.2.5 Marketing new or existing services or programmes

To assess if the NPOs were using their digital channels for marketing purposes, the channels and the posts were analysed during the research period to see if they were being used to promote events, sales, or services. The website channel was used for marketing services or programmes by 80% ($n=4$) of the NPOs: Org4, Org5, Org16 and Org20 all included marketing of a service, event or programme on their website landing page. Similar results in the analysis of each NPO's most recent e-newsletter confirmed 80% ($n=4$) of the NPO's promoted services or programmes using the channel. Both the Facebook and Twitter channels were used for marketing by 60% ($n=3$) of the NPOs: Org4, Org5, and Org16 all included marketing in the NPO's posts/shares and tweets/retweets during the research segment. However, none of the NPOs used their YouTube video for marketing services or programmes.

Table 18 provides findings of the NPOs' digital channels analysis showing the total count, (per website landing page, e-newsletter, YouTube upload, and/or per post over 14 days on Facebook and Twitter) of communication tailored to marketing services or programmes.

Table 18: Results of content analysis: NPOs' purpose of marketing new or existing services or programmes

Marketing New or Existing Services or Programmes	Org4	Org5	Org16	Org19	Org20
Website (count of landing page)	1	1	1	0	1
E-newsletters (counts of most recent e-news)	0	1	1	1	1
Facebook (count of posts over 14 days)	1	2	16	0	0
Twitter (count of posts over 14 days)	1	1	33	0	0
YouTube (count of most recent video post)	0	0	0	0	0

6.2.2.6 *General organisational goals such as advocacy or campaigning*

During the research period, each channel and post was analysed to evaluate if the NPOs were using their digital channels to promote the NPO's general organisational goals. All ($n=5$) of the NPOs used their website to promote their advocacy work and/or their campaigns. Twitter use during the research segment was analysed, and 80% ($n=4$) of the NPOs' tweets and retweets promoted the general organisational goals of campaigning and/or advocacy. Org16 used 45 tweets/retweets, Org4 used eight tweets/retweets, Org20 used two tweets/retweets and Org19 used one tweet/retweet for general organisational goals. Facebook posts and shares by 60% ($n=3$) of the participating NPOs promoted campaigns or advocacy work, including thirteen posts by Org16, six posts by Org5, and one post by Org4. Org5 and Org19 were the only NPOs to use the e-newsletter channel for general organisational goals of promoting the NPO's campaigning efforts. Similarly, Org5 and Org16 were the only NPOs to use the most recent video upload to the organisation's YouTube channel to promote a current campaign.

Table 19 provides findings of the NPOs' digital channels analysis showing the total count, (per website landing page, e-newsletter, YouTube upload, and/or per post over 14 days on Facebook and Twitter) for general organisational goals.

Table 19: Results of content analysis: NPOs' purpose of general organisational goals such as advocacy or campaigning

General Organisational Goals Such As Advocacy Or Campaigning	Org4	Org5	Org16	Org19	Org20
Website (count of landing page)	1	1	1	1	1
E-newsletters (count of most recent e-news)	0	1	0	1	0
Facebook (count of posts over 14 days)	1	6	13	0	0
Twitter (count of posts over 14 days)	8	0	45	1	2
YouTube (count of most recent video post)	0	1	1	0	0

Overall, the results of the content analysis show all of the NPOs are using the five digital channels most often for public relations purposes to build reputation and credibility, or to promote general organisational goals such as advocacy or campaigning. Following these two broad purposes, the NPOs in the research sample also use most of the digital channels for fundraising and gaining donor support, and marketing new or existing services or programmes. The NPOs use website and Facebook digital channels the most for all the purposes mentioned above.

Just two NPOs are using any of the digital channels for the purposes of recruiting or communicating with volunteers (one NPO using e-newsletters and one NPO using Twitter). Finally, Facebook is the only channel currently being used for stakeholder engagement, by a very small number of organisations, showing that the NPOs use digital channels the least frequently for stakeholder engagement. The results of the content analysis show Carboni and Maxwell (2015) are correct that NPOs are using their digital channels with a rather scattershot approach.

7. DISCUSSION

This research on New Zealand NPOs assessed what digital communication channels are being used, how they are being used, and what purposes the most five popular channels are being used to achieve. As discussed previously, all 20 NPOs invited to participate were already using one or more digital channels and had a communication practitioner managing the organisation's digital communication. Combining methodologies of qualitative and quantitative research, as recommended in previous studies by Babbie (2013), Poland (1995), and Williams (2007), and proposed in literature on research best practice by Guillemin and Gillam (2004), assisted in validating the findings, and highlighted the similarities and/or disparities between what the interviews and the content analysis on the NPOs' digital channels revealed. The interview findings show that New Zealand NPOs are using multiple channels to communicate with their stakeholders, but the aggregated qualitative (Section 6.1) and quantitative results (Section 6.2) indicate the channels are not being used as strategically as they could for stakeholder engagement.

7.1 Qualitative Interviews with New Zealand NPOs

7.1.1 New Zealand NPOs and digital channels

Hou and Lampe (2015) assert NPOs' use of multiple digital channels is increasing. The findings of this study show New Zealand NPOs are indeed using multiple digital technologies (as shown in Section 6.1.1), with over 80% of the respondents in this study using at least five digital channels. This uptake in digital communication by New Zealand NPOs helps demonstrate that the significant shift from traditional to online communication, as reported by Nielson (2015), is equally observable in the non-profit sector's communication practice. Additionally, of the 20 NPOs participating in the study, 40% state they also use other digital channels (in addition to those named in the research

list), including both internal and external channels. However, despite this broad ranging uptake, most of the communication practitioners are reluctant to add further channels to their existing digital toolkit; 80% listed a shortage of resources as the main issue preventing the deployment of communication across more channels. In fact, most of the communication practitioners prefer to stick to the channels that are inherently familiar to them. This finding is consistent with Hou and Lampe's (2015) assertion that various challenges continue to prevent NPOs from fully investing in existing, or additional digital channels to meet their organisational goals.

If the participating NPOs could find the resources to add channels, the channel they would most likely consider is Instagram: 25% of the research participants mentioned the NPO might like to use the channel in the future. Most of the NPOs mentioned this is largely because they think Instagram attracts a younger stakeholder segment that they are struggling to engage with. In this respect the findings are consistent with Messner and Guidry's (2015) assertion that Instagram is fast growing in popularity and therefore is attracting the interest of NPOs. However, if anything is preventing NPOs from adopting Instagram, it appears to be a lack of information on how best to use the channel for engagement to achieve their organisational goals. Org8 reported it "did kind of dabble with Instagram a little bit, [But] haven't quite nailed down how that would work" to achieve the organisation's goals. Broadly, NPOs remain unsure of how Instagram can be used effectively and consistently as part of their strategic communication, which echoes the concerns raised by Messner and Guidry (2015) and Russmann and Svensson (2016), that Instagram use is still experientially applied, and the scholars suggest this is because the non-profit sector's knowledge of the channel is still limited. Further investigation of Instagram use by NPOs could assist the sector to explore the channel's viability as a communicative tool.

A shortage of time to dedicate to digital communication prevents 30% of NPOs in this study from including additional channels. This is consistent with findings in prior research by Briones et al. (2010), Gray et al. (2015), and Wells (2012). Briones et al. (2010) in particular notes one of the

largest barriers for NPOs' is time and this can impact on their use of digital communication channels. During the interviews the communication practitioners further report they are reluctant to try additional channels because they are not confident that the return on investment (ROI) would be worth the effort, and they are unsure whether using more channels would equal greater audience reach. This is a significant finding due to the fact NPOs are reliant on achieving their organisational outcomes so that they can continue providing their services to their communities. If NPOs can prove the ROI is that the organisational outcomes are being met through digital communication, it will validate the time and energy that the communication practitioner is spending on the digital channels. Org17 noted the NPO still relies on traditional communication to target an older audience, but are concerned the communication is probably still not reaching younger stakeholders through the digital channels the organisation is currently using – a common concern amongst organisations in this study. The practitioners' scepticism that adding new digital channels may actually improve stakeholder engagement also supports Jenkins' (2006) assertions that NPOs are unsure about how best to engage with specific groups of stakeholders online. In fact, most of the NPOs were not very confident in their responses when asked if they are actually engaging with their stakeholders online through their existing digital channels: for example, Org7 reported it 'thinks' the digital channels used by the NPO are effectively reaching its stakeholders. Further, most of the NPOs appeared ambivalent whether reach actually equals engagement. This uncertainty over whether NPOs are reaching and engaging with the variety of stakeholders they wish to target through their digital channel choices might explain why 30% of the communication practitioners want to focus their digital communication efforts to improve the communication across the channels they already have knowledge using, rather than attempting to use new channels they are not overly familiar with. As Org2 noted, the NPO's reasons for sticking to the organisation's current complement of digital channels is due to the fact the NPO has "inherited familiarity with more established channels". However, only 36% of the NPOs appear to realise the importance of building practitioner skills/competence for engagement practices, so that their practitioners can continue to improve the

online engagement and build on existing familiarity. This research finding could explain Kaul (2013) and Liu's (2012) assertion that NPOs appear to be ambivalent to trying new channels, as the communication practitioners' responses during the interview indicate strongly that the familiarity factor could be preventing NPOs from extending their online practice.

Insufficient content is another reason 25% of the communication practitioners in this study are reluctant to use more channels, reporting the NPO is not able to consistently apply new content for every channel, due to resourcing limitations and/or lack of knowledge on how best to use multiple channels; Org3 noted it wants to consolidate the channels the NPO is already using to ensure the channels are working effectively before embarking on any new communication online. Similarly, 20% of the NPOs report that a lack of practitioner knowledge on how best to engage across emerging digital channels is a key factor preventing them from expanding their digital communication; although, as Org10 admits it is sometimes difficult to "attract someone with the right skills for operating digital communication". This finding aligns with the research by Campbell et al. (2014) and Toledano (2010), who assert lack of practitioner knowledge on the application/use of new channels prevents NPOs from utilising the benefits that digital communication can ultimately provide, and seems to support the suggestion that NPOs may be missing out on new opportunities with emergent digital communication. This adds weight to the requirement for communication practitioners to have sound knowledge of digital channels and public relations best practice.

7.1.2 Communication practitioners' responses on digital channel use

For 70% of the communication practitioners, pushing communication out across multiple digital channels does provide NPOs with an opportunity to extend their communication reach across a wider audience (see Section 6.1.2). However, despite the fact most of the participant NPOs are using multiple channels, only a small number of the NPOs (20%) perceive utilising simultaneous delivery of communication across multiple channels to be advantageous for NPOs to engage better

with stakeholders. This study thus confirms New Zealand NPOs' perception of digital channel efficacy is consistent with Hou and Lampe's (2015) findings that NPOs are increasingly using multiple digital channels, but are still not able to turn the communication delivery into dialogic exchange. The NPOs do value having multiple digital channels available to them; however, this study shows the practitioners are still generally using the same approach they apply to traditional one-way communication. Although the NPOs are attempting to apply converged media methods to their communication, they are not generally achieving the collaboration and participation that converged practices across the digital channels can provide. Similarly, the NPOs are not applying transmedia practices, as they are not using a storytelling approach to make the most of the communicative opportunities that are unique to each channel. These findings are consistent with research findings by Barker and Sutherland (2013) and Jenkins (2004, 2006), revealing that the NPOs are slow or reluctant to engage in converged media practices or transmedia storytelling, which could be because the NPOs' communication practitioners still do not have the relevant theoretical knowledge of how to best use multiple digital channels.

The reported advantages of digital channels for the NPOs varied, but the most consistent response (discussed in Section 6.1.2.1) provided by the interviewees was that digital channels enable NPOs to deploy communication in a timely manner, with all of the communication practitioners noting a key attribute is the ability to get information out quickly to stakeholders. This suggests the practitioners are using Ledingham and Bruning (1999) and Hon and Grunig's (1999) relationship elements of trust and commitment, by placing importance on the provision of information and proving the NPO is committed to the cause. However, the findings discussed later in this discussion will prove that while the communication practitioners are all very aware that digital channels allow for timely communication, they are not actually regularly taking advantage of this affordance. Therefore, the practitioners are not actually applying Hon and Grunig's (1999) relationship management typology to their digital communication practice. Further, 70% of the practitioners note digital channels allow NPOs to strategically target communication to specific stakeholders.

A distinct advantage for using digital channels over traditional print (reported by 60% of the NPOs) is the fact they are cost effective and provide increased possibilities for stakeholder engagement. This research finding concurs with Hou and Lampe (2015) and Kinzey (2013), who observe that digital channels can provide cost-effective opportunities for NPOs to widen their reach. However, communicating online can come at a cost to an organisation's reputation if the information disseminated to stakeholders attracts negative feedback online. Indeed, the risk of negative PR on the digital channels is a real concern for 30% of the NPOs participating in this study, a view shared by Parveen et al. (2015), Warner et al. (2014), and Briones et al. (2010). The fear of attracting negative PR could explain why NPOs are reluctant to use their digital channels more often for engagement with stakeholders, simply because they are unsure of how to deal with it.

A few practitioners were concerned about just how visible the digital communication was to stakeholders, with 30% of the NPOs noting constantly shifting updates to the various channels' news feed algorithms could limit the organisation's reach, meaning messaging could be lost, particularly because, as discussed in Section 2.4.3, most NPOs rely on the organic reach of their posts (Ballings et al., 2015). Similarly, 25% of the NPOs thought digital communication actually impacted negatively on their organisation, with reduced opportunities to engage face-to-face with stakeholders. However, as Williams and Brunner (2010) have asserted, digital communication does not replace face-to-face connections entirely, but it can supplement and enhance relationship building and stakeholder engagement. Once again, to fully understand what impact digital communication has on NPOs and their stakeholder relationships, organisations would need to evaluate their online communication and measure it against their traditional communication methods.

7.1.3 Digital communication and evaluation/measurement by NPOs

Evaluation and measurement of digital communication by New Zealand NPOs appears to be variable. Although a small number of the communication practitioners report they are currently evaluating

their digital channels, most admit they are not evaluating their digital channels as well as they could possibly be doing. Only 30% report measurement and evaluation of digital channels is advantageous to the NPO, despite the fact this evaluation could provide NPOs with the ability to check and improve the effectiveness of the communication through each of the digital channels. A greater number of NPOs mentioned that monitoring and engaging with stakeholders is actually a disadvantage, with 65% reporting that evaluation of digital communication is time consuming (see Section 6.1.2.2). Similarly, 35% of the NPOs stated digital channel analytics tools are too resource intensive. This finding helps explain the lack of confidence the NPOs have concerning whether the digital communication disseminated across their multiple channels is actually serving the purposes they set out to achieve. As explained in Section 6.1.3, the communication practitioners were asked if they are applying formal evaluation methods and/or informal evaluation methods. Just 35% of the NPOs report they are using both formal and informal evaluation methods, while 20% admit that they do not evaluate their digital communication at all. Branston and Bush (2010), Campbell et al. (2014), and Lovejoy and Saxton (2012), have all asserted NPOs' communication practitioners are struggling to measure the communication they currently provide across their digital channels, despite the value that evaluation would provide for the NPOs. Macnamara and Zerfass (2012) propose that most organisations' evaluation practices are fragmented, and therefore this problem might not be limited to communication practitioners employed by NPOs. The practitioners who are evaluating their digital channels all use the evaluation results to drive their next campaign, and are using it as a reporting tool to justify the channel use to the NPOs. However, only 18.75% reported that positive evaluation results would lead to more resources, or would encourage the NPOs to try new channels. Further, just 12.5% of the NPOs stated evaluation of digital channel use could lead to more time for practitioners to devote to strengthening the engagement with stakeholders across the multiple channels they use. This further supports research findings by Briones et al. (2010) and Waters et al. (2009), that evaluation of digital communication by NPOs is limited and the organisations do not realise the full value that evaluation can provide. However, Hou and Lampe (2015) propose that if

the NPOs' practitioners do evaluate their channel usage, it should prove the digital communication channels are effective at fulfilling the NPOs' various organisational engagement goals. In turn, by proving the digital communication is successful in achieving a range of possible outcomes, the communication practitioners should be able to justify the need for more time, resource allocation and obtain management buy-in to digital channel use by NPOs.

Knowledge of how to evaluate and/or how to understand what evaluation results mean for the NPO appears to present the biggest challenge to New Zealand NPOs, including the practitioners that have stated they are presently following evaluation practices: Org4 commented "we probably struggle a bit in terms of all of the information that we get, of how to understand it and how to have consistency across it". Similarly, Org9 responded that the organisation struggles through a lack of "skills of how to evaluate" the digital channels. The issue of how to make the evaluation results work better for the NPOs also appears to be a real problem for many of the practitioners currently evaluating their digital communication. These challenges could be a direct result of the practitioners not being trained in new channels, or of technology changes to the channels already being used to deploy communication, meaning constant upskilling is required, which Branston and Bush (2010) suggest will be an ongoing concern. Further, the findings of this study concur with Kenix's (2008) research results that NPOs do value the benefits of evaluation, but they just do not have the knowledge of how best to apply measurement/evaluation across multiple channels, and do not know what to do with the results. This finding shows the NPOs are not applying the strategic variables, which Hon and Grunig (1999) propose could help NPOs with their measurement. However, one practitioner did mention that obtaining the NPOs' management's buy-in to digital communication and evaluation is a challenge, and similar managerial resistance has also been suggested in studies by Briones et al. (2010) and Toledano (2010). The findings show NPOs are putting effort into using the technologies, but for a range of reasons they are not putting the same effort into investigating and/or evaluating their use of the digital channels to measure the outcome of the communication.

7.1.4 Feedback on communication through digital channels

As discussed in Section 6.1.4 of the findings, most of the NPOs report they receive regular stakeholder feedback on their digital communication, although the practitioners generally referred to the feedback as likes and shares of the NPOs stories and posts, rather than direct feedback on engagement. One way for NPOs to achieve a goal of building a communal relationship with their various stakeholders is through ongoing feedback and two-way sharing of communication, which Hon and Grunig (1999), Ledingham (2003), and Ledingham and Bruning (1998) propose can be achieved by applying the theoretical framework for relationship management. One of the relational elements the scholars have explored at length, and that NPOs should consider, is that feedback can assist in developing a communal relationship, which NPOs can acknowledge and foster through the giving and receiving of information to ensure the relationship is successful.

Additionally, only 20% of participating NPOs ask stakeholders for feedback as part of an evaluation of the NPO's digital communication practice, and a further 10% admit the NPO does not ask for, nor receive any feedback on any of the digital channels. Interestingly, only one practitioner of the 20 participating NPOs reported the NPO has conducted a digital survey of the channels to get feedback from stakeholders on its digital communication. Rybalko and Seltzer's (2013) research suggests Fortune 500 companies are using their Twitter channels dialogically and are responding to feedback to close the dialogic loop; however, the findings in this study differ markedly and suggest that New Zealand NPOs are not drawing on the public relations theories conducive to relationship management in their digital communication, which could assist the non-profit sector to strengthen its stakeholder relationships.

7.1.5 NPOs and digital communication strategies

Just one NPO has a strategy in place to plan how the digital channels will be used and which stakeholders will be targeted with each channel, demonstrating that it has made a commitment to

using digital channels as part of the NPO's communication strategy (see Section 6.1.5). Hon and Grunig (1999) and Ledingham and Bruning (1998) assert that commitment is a relational element NPOs should apply through digital channels to show stakeholders they are invested in building and maintaining relationships. Interestingly, the majority of the NPOs are at present actively using their digital channels without any plan to guide them to ensure they are communicating strategically with their stakeholders. This is despite the communication practitioners acknowledging that a strategy would assist them: Org6 noted "we are aware that it's important and we are working on it." Org18 responded the NPO is currently developing a strategy "to create a roadmap for the organisation, because a lot of digital channels, while they are essentially free to use from a cost perspective, actually take a lot of time and resources." One NPO reported that it is planning to roll-out a digital communication strategy, but the biggest issue is trying to get buy-in from the organisation. This prevents the NPOs from using the channels with a clear purpose in mind. Most of the concerns the NPOs raised in the interviews exist purely because they do not have a digital communication strategy in place that would regulate posting to the digital channels, monitoring the channels, responding to stakeholders' comments, and evaluation and reporting on communication across the channels. In fact, 20% of the NPOs see the strategic requirements of digital communication as a disadvantage of using digital channels.

7.1.6 Value of digital for NPOs - promoting online participation

Most of the practitioners assert that they are actively promoting digital channels to their stakeholders, and report they promote Facebook and/or Twitter channels through the organisation's e-newsletter, or on the website channel, as outlined in Section 6.1.6. Indeed, the communication practitioners assert they recognise the need to encourage participation in communication across multiple digital channels, as they are aware the digital space is where many of their stakeholders look for information. The communication practitioners' responses suggest they are using the four theoretical components of control mutuality, trust, relational satisfaction and relational

commitment, which Brunner (2008) also posits is an effective framework for organisations to encourage stakeholders to participate and build relationships with NPOs. However, many of the NPOs did not seem confident that promoting the channels will actually equate to increased participation, with Org10 noting “it’s the underlying intention that someone will like, share or donate, but it’s not an exclusive ask”. These reservations appear to be consistent with the findings of Lovejoy and Saxton (2012), O’Neil and Schieffer (2014), Svensson et al. (2014), and Warner et al. (2014), who assert NPOs still appear to be challenged with using digital channels dialogically to encourage participation. Therefore, the results of this study contrast with the findings of Macnamara (2010), as the NPOs’ communication practitioners in this research reported they cannot be certain that they are listening and engaging with stakeholders. This finding suggests the practitioners are not confident in encouraging online participation.

7.1.7 Digital channels: New Zealand NPOs’ top five

Interviews with the NPOs’ communication practitioners showed that New Zealand NPOs are using a variety of digital channels to communicate with their various stakeholders, including: websites, e-newsletters, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn and blogs. In Section 6.1.7, the findings show five of those channels were clearly the most widely and frequently used across the organisations: websites, e-newsletters, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Of those five digital channels, the website and e-newsletter channels were the most popular, used by all 20 NPOs, followed by Facebook, Twitter, and finally YouTube.

The participating NPOs all regard websites as one of their top digital communication channels to communicate with stakeholders; Org16 commented that “the website is the backbone of our social media.” This is consistent with the research findings of Branston and Bush (2010), Kim et al. (2014), and Wiencek (2014), who note that a website is one of the most widely used digital channels by NPOs. However, despite the NPOs’ perception that the website is one of their number one

communication channels, when the communication practitioners were asked how the website channel impacts on stakeholder relationships, Org4 admitted “the website just sits there as a digital asset with the appeal sort of thing”. This confirms Ingenhoff and Koelling’s (2009) assertion that NPOs are predominately using websites to seek donation support and are not yet actually using the channel effectively for stakeholder engagement. Further, just one NPO mentioned it was analysing its website channel, with a view to updating it to improve its functionality, and the practitioner mentioned it was hoped this would improve the website’s use for stakeholder engagement. It does appear that NPOs still place too much value on their website and expect that the channel will achieve everything – including engagement and participation.

All of the NPOs identified e-newsletters as the most popular channel, alongside the websites. The finding that participating NPOs regard their e-newsletter channel so highly diverges from the research findings of Buchanan and Luck (2006), who assert that the NPOs they studied did not value e-newsletters at all as a communication channel. However, the responses from the communication practitioners confirm that, as with the NPOs websites, many of the NPOs (50%) are only using their e-newsletters as required; and just 35% report they use e-newsletters on a regular basis. Therefore, the value the NPOs are placing on their e-newsletters does not seem to reflect in their actual regular communication practice. The communication practitioners’ responses are consistent with Kinzey (2013) and Maslowska et al. (2011) that e-newsletters are a safe option for NPOs to use for communication, as NPOs can control the information that goes into the channel, and can be assured of the audience reach. This suggests that NPOs may realise the worth of e-newsletters as a digital channel, but may not have enough practitioner or theoretical knowledge of how best to use the channel to maximise its effectiveness for the purposes of building and maintaining stakeholder relationships. This finding aligns with the recommendations by Buchanan and Luck (2006), Gray et al. (2015), Gray and Hopkins (2014), and Kirkwood (2014), that further research is required to better equip NPOs with knowledge of how best to use this ubiquitous channel to maximise its value as a communicative tool.

Facebook is ranked the third most popular digital channel for stakeholder communication and engagement by 95% of the participating NPOs. Just as Caers et al. (2013) and Campbell et al. (2014) have suggested, Facebook is still considered a significant digital channel by most NPOs: Org4 notes “Facebook is really our key social media platform that we use now.” The practitioners explain the reason for using the channel is that NPOs think Facebook reaches a far wider audience than any other channel. Org10 reports “Facebook is really useful because that is where a large audience is; we are able to engage easily with people on there; and in terms of New Zealand we get more reach on Facebook than we do on Twitter or some other platforms”. Similarly, Org9 said “Facebook seems to be a good one, just for being able to communicate with a mass number of people, and it seems to be the one most people use to connect to their communities”. However, as Ballings et al. (2015) assert, achieving effective results on Facebook posts through extended reach is not a given, and requires organisations to improve the post to ensure it is picked up by the audience (organic reach), or to buy more reach (paid reach). Illustrating this challenge, one communication practitioner (Org11) reports the NPO does not use the Facebook channel, although it has used the channel previously, but due to the lack of resourcing to monitor the channel daily, or to invest in paying to extend the reach, the organisation decided to deactivate the Facebook page. It is possible that NPOs are placing too much faith in Facebook to reach their stakeholders, and are not placing enough emphasis on the content of the post to ensure the organic reach is successful, and/or the NPOs may be better off using another digital channel to further extend their audience reach.

Twitter is listed in the top five most popular channels by 80% of the NPOs participating in this study. Org17 reported the NPO recognises the need to be visible on Twitter, as the NPO is very aware its stakeholders use the channel, and although Org14 only recently launched its Twitter channel to use it to communicate with stakeholders about an annual campaign, it still regards Twitter to be one of its main communication channels. These findings are consistent with Park and Lee (2013) and Svensson et al.’s (2014) assertion that NPOs are becoming increasingly aware of the value Twitter can provide as a digital communication channel. However, of the NPOs not using Twitter, Org11

mentioned it did not think Twitter would reach the audience segment the NPO is aiming to engage, and so the organisation will stick to the more popular channels, such as websites and Facebook. This confirms some of the NPOs that have not tried Twitter may not be aware of the full value that the channel could provide, and therefore may be missing out on opportunities for engagement with the variety of stakeholders that are active in the Twittersphere.

The final digital channel to make it into the top five most popular channels is YouTube; with 75% of the NPOs' communication practitioners stating YouTube is one of their main digital communication channels. However, the NPOs' actual usage of the channel differs vastly. Org10 is the most active user of the YouTube channel, stating the organisation generates video at least once a week. When asked why the NPO uses YouTube as a communication channel, Org10 pointed out, "essentially more and more we are seeing video being consumed and think that is just a trend over the internet, so we do create video and push it natively across Facebook and YouTube". Although YouTube was selected as one of the top five digital channels by research participants, and this finding concurs with the assertion of Barker and Sutherland (2013) and Waters and Jones (2011) that NPOs are actively using YouTube, interviews with the communication practitioners revealed some inconsistencies in both usage and understanding of how best to use the channel; for example, Org9 reports the NPO uses YouTube just once a year for its annual campaign, yet still regards the channel as one of the channels it uses the most. This disparity suggests YouTube is still not being utilised effectively by NPOs as a communicative tool, despite organisations knowing it is a channel they would like to, or should, use.

Of the remaining digital channels (Instagram, LinkedIn, Blogs) that did not make it into the NPOs' top five most popular channels, the results on Instagram use were somewhat surprising: despite Messner and Guidry's (2015) assertion that it is the fastest growing digital channel, Instagram is still relatively under-developed by the New Zealand NPOs. The research by E. Lee et al. (2015) provides some insight on Instagram for NPOs to consider, reporting that Instagram users are often on the

channel daily and use it as a visual online diary of sorts, as well as a venue for social interaction with organisations or people who share common interests. The research to date certainly provides a baseline for future research once more NPOs are confident enough in their knowledge of the Instagram channel to use it for stakeholder engagement. Certainly, Russmann and Svensson (2016) have claimed that Instagram has “surpassed Twitter in terms of number of users and time on the platform” (p. 1). If this is the case, then many New Zealand NPOs are falling short of reaching the stakeholders that may have moved to use Instagram for their online communication.

LinkedIn was named as a top digital channel by just 25% of the research participants, and does not appear to be widely used by New Zealand NPOs. Of the organisations that do use the channel, Org11 confirms the channel is ideal for the NPO to recruit personnel, but the NPO does not use it widely for communicative purposes. Similarly, Org10 reports it only uses LinkedIn sparingly for employment purposes. Calkins (2013), Hou and Lampe (2015), and Witzig et al.’s (2012) assertions that the channel is increasing in use by NPOs are not mirrored in this study.

Finally, of all eight channels analysed in this study, only 10% of the NPOs named blogs in their top five channels. This finding differs markedly from assertions made by Briones et al. (2010), Curtis et al. (2010), Kelleher and Miller (2006), and Kent (2008), that blogs are popular among NPOs. However, the small sample assessed in this study means that the findings may not be generalisable, and further research into New Zealand NPOs’ use of blogs is recommended.

7.1.8 Digital channels: New Zealand NPOs’ frequency of use

Results of the interviews (see Section 6.1.8) confirm the participating NPOs use their Facebook and Twitter channels the most frequently, out of the five most popular channels identified in this study. The participating NPOs report Facebook and Twitter channels are generally updated with content ‘daily’. This finding appears to be consistent with Cho and De Moya’s (2014) assertion that NPOs realise the value in using digital channels regularly to participate in a ‘social environment’ to

encourage communication; however, the quantity of content delivered does not necessarily mean increased quality outcomes for NPOs, nor does it guarantee stakeholders will engage across those channels. Further, Cho and de Moya (2014) assert that NPOs need to consider their motivations for using Facebook, to ensure they are applying strategies to encourage two-way communication, rather than communicating into a vacuum for the sake of appearing visible to the NPOs' online communities for no inherent purpose. The NPOs in this study risk their stakeholders suffering from content fatigue if they are posting content to their digital channels without considering their motivations. Further, the NPOs should consider what they want stakeholders to take from the content; hopefully, the NPOs will want to encourage engagement across Facebook and Twitter as these two channels are ideal for two-way communication to build relationships.

The practitioners have confirmed that the remaining three most popular channels (websites, e-newsletters, and YouTube) are predominately used 'as required' by the NPOs. Of these three channels, the NPOs do appear to update/compose their websites and e-newsletters more often, which is not unexpected, as the NPOs have already stated they value these two channels the most for their communicative purposes. However, even the NPOs that reported they use the e-newsletter channel regularly do not appear to have a fixed strategy in place for how, or when, they will use the channel. Org4 stated the NPO uses its e-newsletter "as required. We don't have a day where they go out, but it's definitely not weekly; it depends on campaigns and timing of newsletters".

Out of the channels assessed in this study that did not make it into the top five, most of the NPOs that deploy communication on LinkedIn report the channel is used 'regularly' for communication. This finding is interesting, as Witzig et al. (2012) suggest NPOs are not using LinkedIn as readily as other digital channels; however, the findings in this study suggest LinkedIn use may be more strategically planned than the other channels. Despite this confidence in LinkedIn as a communication channel, most of the communication practitioners said they only use LinkedIn for posting employment opportunities, which does not align with their earlier statement that they use

LinkedIn often to communicate with stakeholders. Because the channel did not make it into the NPOs' top five channels, the content analysis did not extend to LinkedIn, so it is difficult to determine what this channel is being used for exactly and how effective it really is for NPOs. However, the remaining two channels that did not make it into the top five (Instagram and blogs) are also used mostly 'as required' by most of the communication practitioners. Org3 report "we generally try to do a blog weekly but also on a need basis just depending on the current news and what we have available".

These findings further confirm the NPOs do not have a strategy in place for using any of their digital channels, and tend to use them without a clear plan of what each channel can achieve.

7.1.9 NPOs' communication purposes for using top five channels

The communication practitioners were asked to list the purposes for each of the digital channels they use from a list including: stakeholder engagement; recruiting or communicating with volunteers; fundraising and gaining donor support; PR to build reputation and credibility; marketing new or existing services or programmes; and general organisational goals such as advocacy or campaigning. The findings for each of these purposes are provided in Section 6.1.9.

Although all of the digital channels are being used by the NPOs for more than one of the purposes listed, the collated results show that the communication practitioners have named websites, Facebook and e-newsletters as the channels they prefer to use the most to try and achieve every one of the listed strategic purposes. The exceptions are LinkedIn and blogs, which are reportedly used primarily for the NPOs' purpose of general organisational goals, so Curtis et al.'s (2010) assertion that NPOs are readily using blogs for stakeholder engagement is not supported by these research findings. However, these findings could be blurred by the fact the data segment is so small (just two NPOs named blogs in their top five channels, and five NPOs named LinkedIn in their top five).

The results further show that because most of the communication practitioners do not have a strategy for using multiple channels, they are applying a scattershot approach, as described by Carboni and Maxwell (2015), which is impacting on the NPOs' ability to use the channels more effectively to achieve their organisational goals. For example, the participating NPOs all perceive their websites serve the purpose of stakeholder engagement, which Svensson et al. (2014) have noted is a problem for NPOs, as websites tend not to allow for two-way engagement to build relationships and engage with stakeholders. The findings show that NPOs are trying to do too much with their websites, as the communication practitioners see the channel as the one that will tick all the boxes and assist them to achieve almost all of their organisational goals, including stakeholder engagement. The NPOs' over-reliance on their website diminishes the return on investment for the NPOs, as they do not appear to be fully utilising the particular channels that could afford greater opportunities for two-way communication with the large variety of stakeholders NPOs need to build relationships with, which in turn would assist the NPOs to achieve their organisational goals.

7.1.10 Impact of digital channels on NPOs' stakeholder relationships

The interviews with the communication practitioners show 'increased visibility' of the NPO was considered the most important direct result of using multiple digital channels for communication. However, despite the fact the NPOs want this increased visibility, the communication practitioners do not appear to know how to get maximum benefit from it and just 40% reported a direct result was improved access for stakeholders to contact the NPO. This reflects the conclusions of Park and Lee (2013) and Williams and Brunner (2010), that NPOs have not yet realised that digital channels can assist with improved organisation/stakeholder relationships through online participation. However, not all studies report that NPOs are failing to use their digital channels well. Briones et al.'s (2010) study on the social media use by the American Red Cross demonstrates that NPOs can use a variety of digital channels effectively, and if NPOs do engage in two-way communication online they can achieve goals of "faster service for the community, generating more media coverage, and

receiving positive and negative feedback from stakeholders to improve the organization” (p. 41). It seems these goals have yet to be achieved by the majority of the NPOs in this study.

7.2 Quantitative Content Analysis of NPOs’ Digital Channels

7.2.1 Analysing New Zealand NPOs’ top five digital channels

The five channels that the NPOs’ communication practitioners identified in the interviews as significantly and consistently more popular than other digital channels are: websites, e-newsletters, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. In the content analysis (see Section 6.2.1) each channel was analysed to see if the NPOs’ actual use of the channels aligns with the communication practitioners’ responses around usage.

All of the NPOs view their website as one of their most important digital channels for their communication with stakeholders (as discussed in Sections 6.1.7 and 7.1.7), and this finding is in line with the assertion proposed by Kim et al. (2014) that NPOs place great value on their websites. However, the quantitative analysis findings reveal a disparity between what the communication practitioners think they do, and what they are actually achieving online through their multiple channels. Although the NPOs are aware they need to communicate across multiple channels, and to use their digital channels to supplement the content on their website channel, none of the NPOs in this study use the interaction capabilities of the multiple channels fully.

Most of the NPOs did include a donation ask on their website, which is consistent with the interview findings that the NPOs do use their websites for fundraising or donor support. This finding is also consistent with Branston and Bush’s (2010) assertion that NPOs are using websites predominantly for fundraising and donation requests, and appear to disregard the channel’s attributes that make it suitable as a tool to promote ongoing access to communication. The NPOs also mentioned the

websites are used to share stories, promote news, and provide information so stakeholders can access all of the information they require on the website. However, although most of the NPOs have contact information on their landing page and the NPOs do appear to spread information across one or more of their multiple channels, none promote on the website landing page all of the digital channels stakeholders could go to engage with the NPO. Promoting all of the digital channels the NPO is using to communicate on its website would provide stakeholders with easy access to the variety of channels, create more opportunities for stakeholder engagement, and enable NPOs to reach a much wider audience.

Many of the practitioners interviewed mentioned that financial constraints and shortage of resources impact on their ability to apply best practice in their use of digital channels to communicate with their stakeholders. The content analysis of the website landing pages demonstrates these concerns, and further supports Ingenhoff and Koelling's (2009) suggestion that NPOs' financial limitations have implications for their use of the website channel. Without financial resources to dedicate to digital communication channels, the NPOs are limited to applying the knowledge they do have to use the channels as best they can. However, the limitations of the website channel should be considered by NPOs and alternative channels investigated. This further highlights the importance of practitioners being provided with opportunities to upskill their knowledge of digital communication best practices for each channel used to communicate with their stakeholders. If the ROI for digital channels can be improved, this could lead to increased investment in digital communication by the organisations.

The single e-newsletter that NPOs emailed for the analysis segment of this research provided interesting insights. The NPOs' e-newsletters promoted more of the NPOs' channels than any of the other channels, and most of the NPOs provided clear contact information on the e-newsletter. In addition, most of the NPOs use their e-newsletter to provide a snapshot of content that is available on their websites. However, despite the communication practitioners' assertions that they do

receive feedback on their digital channels, only one NPO provided its communication practitioner's details on its e-newsletter to encourage direct communication and solicit feedback. Although the communication practitioners propose e-newsletters are one of their top five digital channels, their use of the channel is still ad hoc. These results are consistent with the studies by Gray et al. (2015) and Gray and Hopkins (2014) that e-newsletters are favoured by NPOs, but are still not being used as effectively as they could be for relationship management or stakeholder engagement. Importantly, research on NPOs' use of e-newsletters is still limited and further studies are recommended. The fact the practitioners report e-newsletters are a valuable channel for NPOs reinforces that this is a channel worth investigating.

Despite the high regard NPOs bestow on Facebook as a channel they can use to communicate with their stakeholders, the NPOs are not using the channel strategically to encourage stakeholder participation or engagement. Although all of the NPOs provide links on their Facebook channel to drive stakeholders through to their website, the majority do not use their Facebook channel to promote any of the other digital channels the NPOs use. More than half of the NPOs also include a donate now and/or message now link to promote action and encourage Facebook users to contact them. However, most of the communication practitioners reported that while they get some feedback, they are unsure what to do with any comments they receive, so the value of these links is questionable. Caers et al. (2013) has suggested NPOs are falling behind other organisations when it comes to the use of Facebook for communication with stakeholders, and although most NPOs are actively using Facebook, this study confirms this assertion around stakeholder communication is correct. The limited engagement on the NPOs' posts on their Facebook channel during the analysis period show the NPOs are not only missing opportunities for direct engagement with stakeholders, but are also missing out on the organic reach that is essential for resource-poor organisations (Ballings et al., 2015).

Although most of the NPOs in this study consider Twitter an ideal channel for communicating with stakeholders, the quantitative analysis findings are not consistent with the qualitative results. Most of the participating NPOs only promote their website channel on their Twitter channel. However, none of the NPOs engage much at all with stakeholders on Twitter, which further verifies Svensson et al.'s (2014) findings that NPOs are not using Twitter dialogically for two-way communication. It is possible that Park and Lee (2013) are correct that stakeholders are reluctant to participate on the Twitter channel; the scholars posit that 140 characters or less may be a barrier to stakeholders who may wish to engage with NPOs, but consider this channel too restricting for engagement.

YouTube channel use by the NPOs shows that although the NPOs have provided links to the organisation's website on the YouTube channel, the NPOs do not use YouTube to promote the NPOs' other digital channels. The YouTube channel is used the least frequently of the top five channels analysed. The YouTube channels also have the lowest numbers of followers, and the fewest posts to the channel, suggesting the channel is not used to its full potential. This finding runs counter to Barker and Sutherland's (2013) and Waters and Jones' (2011) suggestion that NPOs are using YouTube strategically to reinforce messages across other channels. Although the study confirms the NPOs do value the channel for its technological attributes, and most of the NPOs have a relatively large following, the lack of both engagement and measurement suggests communication posted to the channel is applied ad hoc. Earlier studies' suggestion that NPOs actuate YouTube too broadly appears to be correct. Therefore, it is recommended that NPOs should consider using YouTube more strategically to target specific stakeholder groups.

Overall, NPOs are missing opportunities for engagement. If NPOs are serious about providing increased opportunities for stakeholders to engage with them across multiple channels, they need to think more strategically about the placement of any communication, monitor the posts, and take advantage of every opportunity to engage with stakeholders across the digital channels.

7.2.2 New Zealand NPOs' purposes for using digital channels

The quantitative analysis of the five NPOs' website, e-newsletter, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube channels (see Section 6.2.2) reveals that the New Zealand NPOs' use of digital channels is significantly more focused on serving certain purposes over others, and further that the purposes actually achieved are not always aligned with organisations' stated goals.

7.2.2.1 Stakeholder engagement

Despite the practitioners' optimistic responses during the interviews that they are using most of their digital channels for stakeholder engagement, the content analysis results (provided in detail in Table 14 in Section 6.2.2.1) show the NPOs' websites, Facebook, Twitter, e-newsletter and YouTube channels are being used for a number of purposes but none of the channels are being used particularly well to foster two-way communication to encourage engagement and build relationships with stakeholders. Throughout the 14-day segment analysis on the NPOs' use of Facebook, four NPOs did respond to comments (on up to three posts). However, the comments did not lead to further engagement on the channel by the NPOs. The e-newsletter channel was similarly limited in terms of engagement by the NPOs and the stakeholders' responses; Org20 was the only organisation to demonstrate stakeholder engagement through the NPO's e-newsletter, using the channel to invite stakeholders to provide feedback to the NPO. Most notably, the content analysis shows the NPOs did not use their website, Twitter or YouTube channel at all for stakeholder engagement during the research sample. This finding shows Park and Lee's (2013) assertion that NPOs are not using Twitter to engage in two-way communication is correct.

As discussed in 7.2.1, the NPOs do appear to be attempting to use a converged media method to spread their communication across multiple channels. However, they are not taking advantage of the transmedia opportunities for greater participation that Jenkins (2004), Pammet (2015), and Edmond (2015) have posited NPOs can achieve if they use public relations theories and segment the

delivery of their communication across multiple digital channels to engage stakeholders. The features of Facebook make the channel particularly suitable for stakeholder engagement; however, this needs commitment from the NPOs to encourage stakeholders. This encouragement of engagement might encompass being more strategic with selecting and designing and placing posts, and looking for opportunities to create posts that will make stakeholders want to respond and share to push the organic reach out to a wider audience. Twitter and e-newsletters are also being overlooked by the NPOs with regard to the potential of both channels for stakeholder engagement. Despite what the communication practitioners believe, a website can only provide limited options for stakeholder engagement, either through online forums or feedback forms, but it can potentially be used as an access point to guide stakeholders to other digital channels that provide richer opportunities for engagement. For example, Twitter is growing in popularity and can offer timely conversations to get information out quickly to stakeholders. A channel that Gray and Hopkins (2014) suggest NPOs can better use to promote engagement and build relationships with stakeholders is e-newsletters, which NPOs may use to send out feedback forms, surveys and invitations to connect across other digital channels, or directly with the organisation over the phone or via email.

7.2.2.2 Recruiting or communicating with volunteers

The content analysis (outlined in Table 15 in Section 6.2.2.2) assessed each of the five channels to identify if the NPOs' posts during the sample were being used for the purposes of recruiting or communicating with volunteers. The results show the NPOs are not using any of their multiple digital channels effectively for recruitment or communication with volunteers. Only one NPO (Org4) included a post on its Twitter channel to recruit volunteers and another NPO (Org20) used its e-newsletter for volunteer recruitment purposes. Borst (2014) has questioned whether Twitter is an effective channel to use to recruit or communicate with volunteers, and asserts that other channels may be more appropriate; however, none of the other channels in this study included any volunteer

recruitment information or promotion. Because the channels could not be assessed to see if any posts for volunteers did promote feedback, it proved difficult to determine which channels have been found to be effective for this purpose. However, of the five channels, e-newsletters, Facebook, and YouTube could potentially all be used strategically for this purpose. For example, the NPOs could post a volunteer recruitment video to YouTube and share it on Facebook to entice volunteers with more information and stories to begin building a relationship, and e-newsletters could assist in maintaining the relationship once it has been formed.

7.2.2.3 Fundraising and gaining donor support

Four of the five NPOs have used at least one of the digital channels for the purposes of fundraising and gaining donor support (shown in Table 16), through posts across the channels asking for donation support. Most of the NPOs appear to use their website most often to promote their fundraising or donation efforts. Org10 noted they use the website channel for fundraising because “the website is a platform we can control entirely, which is good for commerce in terms of getting donations.” E-newsletters and Facebook were also used by three NPOs to promote a donation ask. The most fundraising-related posts by one NPO during the research came from Org20, which had 20 Facebook posts promoting the same fundraising campaign over the 14 days of analysis. Although more of the NPOs are using multiple channels to promote this purpose, the results still show the channels are not being used as effectively as they could. Park and Rhee (2010) suggest “in order for non-profit organisations to generate support, they need to develop favourable relationships” (p. 1). If the NPOs have a more nuanced strategy in place, they could promote their fundraising and donation campaigns across multiple channels. For example, e-newsletters could be used more effectively if they are planned to coincide with a fundraising campaign, then sent out as a personalised request to stakeholders, and followed by an e-newsletter with stories of where/how the donations are spent, to encourage stronger relationships.

7.2.2.4 PR to build reputation and credibility

All of the participating NPOs use multiple channels for PR purposes to build their NPO's reputation and credibility (shown in Table 17); Org19 and Org20 used all five channels. Out of all of the purposes assessed in this study, the NPOs seem to use their multiple channels the most consistently for PR purposes. Of all five digital channels analysed, websites, Facebook and Twitter were used the most frequently for PR by all of the participating NPOs. Saffer et al. (2013) suggest that organisations should use the interactive functionality of Twitter more effectively to influence stakeholders, prove their credibility, and achieve a "positive public relations outcome" (p. 214); the NPOs in this study appear to be using Twitter for this aim. However, the scholars also assert that to achieve this purpose via Twitter, NPOs need to make sure the content results in two-way communication and is closely monitored to ensure the best public relations outcomes are being achieved. Saxton and Lovejoy (2012) and Waters and Jamal (2011) reported similar suggestions; however, the scholars noted that NPOs are presently not using Twitter for two-way communication. The findings in this study do not concur with the earlier studies, as Twitter was reportedly used by 80% of the NPOs for the purposes of PR. In this study, YouTube was the least used for general PR purposes, although the channel could potentially prove to be very effective as a PR tool, if the NPOs were to use it as a visual tool to promote success stories to share across the multiple other channels they are already using. Ledingham and Bruning (1998) also support this suggestion, noting that public relations should be seen as a relationship management function, and "public relations programmes can be designed around relationship goals, with communication strategies employed to support the achievement of those goals" (p. 62). However, because most of the NPOs are not evaluating their digital channels or gaining much engagement across the channels, it is difficult to assess whether the communication being posted online has actually built the reputation and credibility of the NPO from the perspective of the stakeholders.

7.2.2.5 Marketing new or existing services or programmes

As a result of the content analysis, most of the NPOs were found to use multiple digital channels for the purposes of marketing new or existing services or programmes (shown in Table 18), although, Org19 only used one channel (e-newsletters) for marketing the NPO's upcoming event and services, and Org20 only used two channels (website and e-newsletters). None of the NPOs used YouTube for marketing their services or programmes, despite the opportunities a visual channel such as YouTube could provide. Most of the NPOs appear to use their website and e-newsletters for marketing purposes, which those channels are certainly well-suited to, in line with Macnamara's (2010) observation that "most marketing, promotion and, and sales-related communication is outbound and predominantly one-way" (p. 32). However, marketing can be used to promote relationships, and if NPOs want to increase stakeholder uptake of services or programmes, then they should consider using the same relationship elements proposed by Hon and Grunig (1999), to make sure the marketing is achieving the elements of satisfaction, so that stakeholders will return. Freeman and Reed (1983) have similarly promoted key principles for any organisation that intends to undertake marketing: the scholars advise having a strategy in place for marketing, which includes designing services or products to meet the needs of stakeholders.

7.2.2.6 General organisational goals such as advocacy or campaigning

All NPOs were found to use multiple channels for the purposes of general organisational goals such as advocacy or campaigning (shown in Table 19). The NPOs' website channel was used by all five NPOs to promote the organisation's goals. Bortree and Seltzer (2009) have asserted that "advocacy groups are not taking advantage of the dialogic strategies afforded by social networking" (p. 318). Although this study did find the NPOs are using most of the digital channels analysed in this study for the purposes of promoting their general organisational goals, the findings still show NPOs are not using them dialogically, which is in line with Bortree and Seltzer's (2009) findings. Even though the

NPOs are promoting their organisational goals such as their upcoming campaigns, the lack of stakeholder engagement means the NPOs do not have any measurable evidence that the communication placed on any of the digital channels was successful.

Overall, the quantitative analysis showed very clearly that the NPOs are not achieving through their digital channels all of the NPOs' desired communication purposes. Although the NPOs' most popular digital channels are being used for soliciting donations and fundraising, for general organisational goals, and for PR, they are being used less for recruiting or communicating with volunteers, and even less so for stakeholder engagement. The findings have revealed that there is a disparity between what the practitioners think the NPOs are communicating and what they are achieving online.

8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to investigate New Zealand NPOs' use of digital technologies, to assess whether NPOs are using digital channels to engage and interact with their various stakeholders online. The objective was to examine how the NPOs are using the channels to achieve their communication goals, explore if the practitioners are experiencing difficulties in achieving those goals, and identify whether the NPOs' communication practitioners are currently applying public relations theories to their digital communication practice. A literature review was undertaken, which provided some conflicting reports on the non-profit sector's use of digital channels and indicated that gaps exist regarding whether and how NPOs use multiple digital channels strategically for stakeholder engagement and relationship building. The existing literature provided a baseline for the researcher to draw on to develop the research methodology (qualitative interviews and quantitative content analysis) and refine the questions for the communication practitioners, to ensure the study was both valid and robust. In the first stage of the research, interviews were undertaken with 20 communication practitioners from New Zealand NPOs, and then a content analysis was conducted of the five most popular digital channels used by five of the participating NPOs. The practitioners' responses were insightful, but were not always aligned with the content analysis findings. However, combining the two methodologies confirmed how the NPOs are using their digital channels and provided evidence that the NPOs are not applying public relations theories effectively to their online communication. Summary answers for each of the research questions are provided below, along with recommendations to assist NPOs to improve their use of digital channels, consideration of limitations of this study, and recommendations for further research.

8.1.1 NPOs' use of multiple digital channels for strategic communication

Most existing research reviewed in Section 2.4 has focused on specific digital channels, or is based on international NPOs' digital channel use. The purpose of the first research question was to identify whether New Zealand NPOs are using multiple digital channels to engage with their stakeholders, identify what channels are being most used by NPOs as a communicative tool, and explore the NPOs' reasons for choosing to use those channels.

RQ1a: Are New Zealand NPOs using multiple digital channels to communicate with their various stakeholders?

New Zealand non-profit organisations are using multiple digital channels, but most are not yet using them effectively for stakeholder engagement. It became evident through the course of this research that many non-profit organisations haven't chosen to use the channels they have adopted for well-considered reasons, but often simply out of a perception that stakeholders were active in that digital space and organisations should therefore follow. The communication practitioners do not appear to understand how digital channels can be best used in concert, within a transmedia context, to achieve a dialogic purpose.

RQ1b: What channels are they using, and how and why have they chosen these channels?

The most popular channels that NPOs are using are websites, e-newsletters, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. The NPOs admit the reasons they are using these channels is because they are familiar with using them, and because they have the perception, although not the proof, that their stakeholders are found in those channels. Most of the channels have been inherited and are being used in much the same way as traditional communication, to disseminate copious amounts of content across some of the channels, while other channels languish. The communication practitioners recognise that they could do more, but the shortage of time and resources is restrictive, so the NPOs have expressed reluctance to try new channels (such as Instagram) that

could potentially afford them with greater relationship building and stakeholder engagement opportunities.

8.1.2 NPOs' use of digital communication for stakeholder engagement and relationships

The second research question in this study aimed to identify whether the NPOs are using their digital channels with thought to strategic communication, and explore whether the NPOs are confident in their use of the channels for stakeholder engagement, and if not, what is preventing the NPOs from using their digital channels effectively.

RQ2a: Are New Zealand NPOs engaging their digital channels strategically to cultivate relationships with their stakeholders?

Most of the communication practitioners consider that they are using their digital channels strategically for stakeholder engagement. However, all but one NPO confirmed that they do not actually have a formal strategy for how, when, or even why they use their digital channels. The content analysis findings confirm the participating New Zealand NPOs are not using their multiple digital channels strategically to engage or cultivate relationships with their stakeholders. Although some of the communication practitioners are evaluating and measuring their digital channels, most are not evaluating their digital communication sufficiently systematically to ensure the communication is achieving the outcomes to meet the NPOs' organisational goals.

RQ2b: What do NPOs hope to achieve; what are they achieving?

Interviews with the communication practitioners affirm that NPOs want to be seen to be active in the digital space, and they hope that they are engaging stakeholders. The NPOs see digital channels as a valuable communication tool that is timely, cost-effective and has a broad reach so they can promote their organisational goals, seek donation support, and market their services or

programmes. However, the NPOs are not achieving their goals of stakeholder engagement. Two-way dialogic communication across any of the digital channels that NPOs use is extremely limited and this could cost the NPOs the very relationships they are striving to build with stakeholders.

8.1.3 NPOs' application of public relations theories to digital communication

The third research question in this study sought to explore whether the NPOs are applying public relations theories to their usage of the digital channels, and how this might explain why the channels are/or are not being used effectively for stakeholder engagement.

RQ3a: Are New Zealand NPOs applying public relations theories of stakeholder engagement and dialogic communication to their digital communication?

Although the communication practitioners perceive they are using the multiple channels well, the results of this research into their current digital communication practice show they are missing out on opportunities for stakeholder engagement and dialogic communication. The results of the content analysis prove the NPOs' communication practitioners are not applying theory around two-way communication in order to assist the NPOs to connect with stakeholders.

RQ3b: How could NPOs employ theory to improve their use of digital channels?

NPOs can build and maintain relationships with stakeholders online if they shift their focus from one-way dissemination of information, and instead create communication that initiates and encourages stakeholder engagement in two-way communication. If the communication practitioners can improve their use of digital channels, the NPOs' organisational goals will be easier to achieve, and if they measure the effectiveness, easier to prove.

Digital channels offer an ideal framework for NPOs to engage in two-way communication and put the dialogic theory into practice. Dialogism has been well researched and has been promoted as an ethical and principled approach that NPOs could use to show stakeholders they are actively seeking

feedback in order to build relationships (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Kent & Taylor, 1998; Kim et al., 2014; Taylor & Kent, 2014).

Initiating dialogic communication is not the only theory that communication practitioners could draw on to improve their communication output and outcomes across digital channels. The relationship management theory refined by public relations scholars, Hon and Grunig (1999) and Ledingham and Bruning (1999), provides a guide for NPOs to consider to shift the focus to the desired relationships, with elements and relational outcomes the communication practitioners can apply to their digital communication strategy (outlined in detail in Table 1 in Section 2.2.2). The findings that have emerged in this study concur with the arguments of Bruning et al. (2008), Macnamara (2010), Park & Rhee (2010), and Ruggiano et al. (2015), that relationship management theories can assist NPOs' communication efforts and encourage interaction and engagement with stakeholders. Attributes of the excellence theory could also assist NPOs, especially if the communication practitioners can show the value in achieving the relational outcomes of control mutuality, trust, relational satisfaction and relational commitment, as recommended by Grunig and Huang (2000).

NPOs need to demonstrate their commitment to stakeholders in order to build and maintain stakeholder relationships. As discussed in the literature review (Section 2.2.3), Hon and Grunig's (1999) variables for creating relationships can also be used for measurement. This theoretical approach can be used by NPOs to develop relationships with stakeholders based on trust, respect, and an open exchange of information, but also to evaluate the effectiveness of communication across the digital channels and assess whether the communication is in fact achieving the organisation's communication and relationship goals (Grunig, 2009).

Digital channels can provide tremendous opportunities for NPOs to build and maintain stakeholder relationships. This research has provided interesting insights into digital channel use by a small sample of the New Zealand non-profit sector, which indicates that although NPOs are using digital

channels, they are not using them particularly well for stakeholder engagement. NPOs need to consider what they are doing with the communication across their digital channels, and determine what they want to achieve, otherwise they risk polluting digital channels with posts that do not actually achieve their organisation's strategic goals.

8.2 Recommendations for New Zealand NPOs

If NPOs are serious about using digital channels to assist NPOs to meet their strategic targets, they must consider how best to encourage engagement and participation in all of the NPOs' activities, whether volunteer recruitment and communication, seeking donation support, marketing a new or existing service, using PR opportunities to gain credibility in their communities, or simply gaining valuable feedback to use in ongoing evaluation to ensure the NPOs are achieving their general organisational goals. To ensure their digital communication is being planned for a distinct purpose, the communication practitioners should work closely with the NPOs to develop a digital communication strategy for using all digital channels (ideally before using them), and include it as part of the organisation's overall communication strategy. If NPOs have a digital communication strategy in place, the communication practitioners will be able to apply dialogic, relationship management and stakeholder engagement theories to create communication with confidence to apply across the NPOs' multiple digital channels. NPOs would then be able to apply the theories to their practice, which would help them to use the channels strategically with consideration to applying a transmedia engagement approach across their multiple digital channels.

As part of their digital strategy, NPOs should invest in resources to investigate the channels and research the NPO's stakeholders to find out what digital channels they use, as this will provide a roadmap of where to target communication more strategically, and will ensure greater ROI in the longer term. With a greater understanding of the digital channels their stakeholders are actively

using, the NPOs can then invest in training for their communication practitioners, so they are better equipped with digital channel best practice to ensure NPOs get maximum ROI. If NPOs are reassessing their digital channel usage, Instagram is one digital channel that needs to be more deeply investigated, and the affordances of e-newsletters could also be better harnessed. Facebook and Twitter in particular should be used more proactively and strategically to engage stakeholders in two-way dialogic communication and to evaluate feedback. Importantly, NPOs should choose channels that are fit for purpose, and avoid the scattershot approach they are currently applying to their digital communication practice.

One way that communication practitioners can keep their digital communication fit for purpose is through regular evaluation and measurement of their digital channels. Ledingham (2003) reminds NPOs that stakeholder relationships are often fluid, which reinforces the need for constant measurement to ensure the communication is warranted and the channels appropriate for the intended purpose. Most of the communication practitioners were unsure what evaluation and measurement of the digital channels would mean for their NPO, which could explain why the buy-in to digital channels by NPOs is still relatively small. NPOs should ensure that their communication practitioners are skilled in evaluation and measurement across all of the digital channels the organisations are using and commit the time to regularly evaluate all digital communication, using both informal and informal tools. If the communication practitioners can report on the success of digital communication, it will show the true value of communication across the multiple channels, so that additional investment can be allocated by NPOs for their future strategic digital communication campaigns.

8.3 Limitations

The communication practitioner roles within the New Zealand non-profit sector appear to be quite fluid, with a number reporting they are about to leave their organisation for new employment options or taking extended leave. Therefore, some practitioners declined to participate in the research due to the timeframe of the study. Other practitioners took part in the interview stage of the research, but declined to proceed further due to their increasing workloads. During the interview stage of this study, some of the communication practitioners admitted they were new to the position, which possibly limited their knowledge of the NPO's strategies for digital communication and may have impacted on the data collected from questions relating to the NPOs' evaluation/measurement outcomes.

Existing research on some of the digital channels was also limited, so it was on occasion difficult to accurately assess this study against other scholarly research. Due to the time constraints of this study, in terms of manageability of data, this research was limited to interviewing the NPO representatives to assess how they used the digital channels to achieve their goals. Further research could examine feedback from the organisation's stakeholders, to clarify whether the needs of users around the digital channels/platforms are being met, which would further illuminate whether the NPOs' digital strategies are achieving their organisational goals.

8.4 Recommendations for Future Research

The aim of this study was to focus on medium to large New Zealand non-profit organisations that had a communication practitioner designated to strategic digital communication. Twenty NPOs participated in the qualitative interview research segment, which provided clear indications of how NPOs currently think their digital channels operate within their engagement with their stakeholders.

However, the quantitative content analysis was narrowed to analyse just five NPOs' top five digital channels (identified through the interviews), to see whether the New Zealand NPOs are using multiple channels strategically and to identify their purpose actually achieved by using the channels.

The findings indicated that New Zealand NPOs are not currently using digital channels strategically or dialogically to build or maintain stakeholder relationships. However, a broadened study of New Zealand NPOs, including a larger cross-section of large and small NPOs, would assist in assessing if these findings are in fact representative of the entire New Zealand non-profit sector, or are limited to large NPOs that have digital knowledge provided by specialist communication practitioners.

Further focussed studies of the digital channels that NPOs are using, (including the newer channels that this study found to have limited research), could also assist NPOs to use multiple digital channels more confidently and strategically for the purpose of stakeholder engagement.

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11. APPENDICES

11.1 Appendix A - Ethics Approval



MASSEY UNIVERSITY

ALBANY

24 September 2015

Christine Kirkwood
39 Cortina Avenue
Johnsonville
Wellington

Dear Christine

Re: Non-Profit Organisations and their Stakeholders: Assessing digital communication strategies

Thank you for your Low Risk Notification which was received on 23 September 2015.

Your project has been recorded on the Low Risk Database which is reported in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committees.

You are reminded that staff researchers and supervisors are fully responsible for ensuring that the information in the low risk notification has met the requirements and guidelines for submission of a low risk notification.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

Please notify me if situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your initial ethical analysis that it is safe to proceed without approval by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:

"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director (Research Ethics), telephone 06 356 9099, extn 86015, e-mail humanethics@massey.ac.nz."

Please note that if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to provide a full application to one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely

Brian T Finch (Dr)
**Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and
Director (Research Ethics)**

Cc Dr Elizabeth Gray
Schl of Communication, Journalism & Marketing
Wellington Campus

Professor Shiv Ganesh
Head of Schl of Communication,
Journalism & Marketing
Albany Campus

11.2 Appendix B – Invitation Letter to NPOs

Dear (Name),

My name is Christine Kirkwood and I am a Master of Communication degree student at Massey University. I am contacting you to invite (org name) to participate in research that I am presently undertaking, guided by Dr Elizabeth Gray, Dr Kane Hopkins, and the School of Communication, Marketing and Journalism at Massey University.

This research project will involve a study of 20 non-profit organisations to assess the range of digital channels being used for strategic communication with stakeholders. As part of my study, I would like to conduct a 15 – 20 minute phone interview with your communication practitioner to gain an understanding of which channels are preferred for stakeholder engagement, and of your reasons for using those channels.

I will then complete an in-depth analysis of the five most popular channels to examine how they are being used by a small sample of five of the study organisations. This second stage will produce insights into whether New Zealand non-profit organisations are achieving the communicative goals they set out to meet through digital communication channels.

It is hoped that the findings will be helpful to New Zealand non-profit organisations and once the data has been collected and analysed (insert name) will be provided with a recommendation report, highlighting how the non-profit sector can apply strategies to increase relationship building and engagement with stakeholders, donors and/or volunteers across a select range of digital channels.

If you have questions about this research project, please contact me for more information:

Christine Kirkwood at C.Kirkwood@massey.ac.nz

or alternatively contact my supervisor, Dr Elizabeth Gray at F.E.Gray@Massey.ac.nz

I will be in touch to confirm if you are willing to participate in this research and set up a time that suits you for our interview.

Sincerely,

Christine Kirkwood

“This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low-risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University’s Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director (Research ethics), telephone 06 356 9099, extn 86015, e-mail humanethics@massey.ac.nz”

11.3 Appendix C – Interview Questions

1. What digital channels do you currently use to send out your organisational communication?
 - Website
 - Facebook
 - LinkedIn
 - Blog
 - Twitter
 - YouTube
 - Electronic newsletters
 - Instagram
 - Other?

2. Please name the five digital channels that your NPO would use the most frequently?

3. I will just go through each of those we have now narrowed down to... Do you use the following channels daily/weekly/ on a regular basis, / or as required?

4. Why do these channels particularly suit your organisation?

5. Do you use your digital channels for the following types of communication (you can answer yes to more than one)?
 - Stakeholder engagement?
 - Recruiting or communicating with volunteers?
 - Fundraising and gaining donor support?
 - PR to build reputation/credibility?
 - Marketing new or existing services or programmes?
 - General organisational goals such as advocacy or campaigning?

6. What are the advantages of using digital channels for your organisation's communication?

7. What are the disadvantages of using digital communication channels?

8. Are you currently formally or informally evaluating your digital communication? (examples might include automated monitoring, metrics analysis, sentiment analysis, opinion mining, audience outcome measurement, or other).

9. What happens to the evaluation/measurement results - for example does it justify the use of more channels, more budget to spend across digital communication channels, or more time/resource?
10. What would be the main problem (if any) inhibiting or preventing your evaluation of your digital communication?
11. What feedback have you received from your stakeholders/volunteers/ or donors through your digital channels?
12. How do you believe your digital channels impact on your orgs *relationship* with stakeholders/volunteers/donors?
13. Have you considered using/trying any other digital channels? What and why, or why not?
14. Does your organisation have a digital communication strategy to target segmented stakeholder/volunteer or donor groups using specific channels, or do you apply the same communication messaging across all digital platforms?
15. Do you currently actively promote online participation to stakeholders/volunteers and/or donors as a way to engage with your organisation (For example through your other channels such as your orgs website, print material, or using digital tools at events)? Why or why not?

11.4 Appendix D – Digital Channels and NPOs’ Strategic Purpose

	Websites (20)	E-newsletters (20)	Facebook (19)	Twitter (16)	YouTube (15)	Instagram (6)	LinkedIn (5)	Blogs (2)
Stakeholder engagement	100% (n=19)	85% (n=17)	94.7% (n=18)	68.7% (n=11)	50% (n=4)	66.6% (n=4)	80% (n=4)	50% (n=1)
Recruiting or communicating with volunteers	80% (n=16)	60% (n=12)	84.2% (n=16)	62.5% (n=10)	25% (n=2)	33.3% (n=2)	60% (n=3)	(0)
Fundraising and donor support	85% (n=17)	75% (n=15)	89.4% (n=17)	75% (n=12)	50% (n=4)	66.6% (n=4)	40% (n=2)	(0)
PR to build reputation and credibility	100% (n=20)	80% (n=16)	100% (n=19)	100% (n=16)	75% (n=6)	66.6% (n=4)	100% (n=5)	100% (n=2)
Marketing new or existing services or programmes	90% (n=18)	85% (n=17)	89.4% (n=17)	75% (n=12)	50% (n=4)	66.6% (n=4)	80% (n=4)	100% (n=2)
General organisational goals such as advocacy or campaigning	80% (n=16)	75% (n=15)	94.7% (n=18)	81.2% (n=13)	75% (n=6)	66.6% (n=4)	100% (n=5)	100% (n=2)

