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Use of Social Media to Enhance Nonprofit Organizational Decision-Making

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Walden University
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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

As a tool for rapid communication, social media (SM) have the potential to revolutionize the way in which nonprofit organizations and stakeholders communicate. Most nonprofit organizations in the United States use some form of SM to engage with stakeholders, however, there is an underutilization of SM used for board decision-making purposes. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine SM and its potential use for board decision-making in nonprofit organizations. The conceptual framework incorporated stakeholder theory, organizational ambidexterity, and an organizational media-user typology. The research question related to the experience of nonprofit board member use of SM for organizational decision-making and stakeholder engagement. Vagle’s postintentional phenomenological research approach guided the study. Data collection involved interviewing a purposeful sample of 25 board members and leaders from 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations in Texas. Data analysis included combining coded data into categories and themes to determine underlying commonalities related to SM use and organizational decision-making. The primary finding was that nonprofit boards rarely use data generated from SM for decision-making purposes. Other findings from the study may improve board decision-making theory and practice and reveal how nonprofit organizations may leverage unfiltered, real-time SM feedback to benefit strategic organizational decision-making. The potential contribution to social change is to deepen the understanding of the effects of SM on nonprofit board decision-making so that boards may be more responsive to a broader range of stakeholder social interests.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to the generations of women in my family who blazed the educational trail before me, Rose Mead, Marion Russell, Jane Lowe, and Jennifer Rose. And to the next generation to follow their academic persuits, Alexander Russell and Diana-Jane Lowe.

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I would like to acknowledge those teachers who inspired me in school: Lisa Auer, Steve Hammack, Ron Cassel, Dr. Diane Kelley, and Dr. Robert Levasseur; those leaders who inspired me in work: Tim Barr, Mike and Meg McClure, and Bill Sala; and those supports who inspired me in life pursuits: John and Jane Herberich, Corey and Jennifer Brown, Cesar Peña, Vivian Bush, and Scott Smith.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Due to rapid online technological advances, the traditional way that nonprofit organizations connect with stakeholders is expanding to include the use of social media (SM) platforms such as Twitter and Facebook (Milde & Yawson, 2017). The evolution from Web 1.0 unidirectional communications to Web 2.0 capabilities of social networks provides a catalyst for open communication, two-way dialogue, and a new method of connecting with stakeholders and gaining stakeholder feedback (Kasavana, Nusair, & Teodosic, 2010; Milde & Yawson, 2017). New dialogistic capabilities allow organizations to capture the collective intelligence of stakeholders (Turban, Liang, & Wu, 2011). In this way, the use of SM platforms has the potential to revolutionize the way nonprofit boards inform organizational decisions.

Although SM provides organizations with an alternative stakeholder engagement method, a gap of knowledge exists related to nonprofit boards' uses of SM as a two-way communication platform with stakeholders. Best practices for including the views of stakeholders in decision-making processes via SM is unknown, based on my review of the literature. The goal of this study was to deepen understanding of the effects of SM on nonprofit board decision-making. Findings from the study might improve theory and practice by enhancing knowledge regarding how nonprofit organizations can leverage SM to extend their organizational knowledge and inform organizational decisions. Having an unfiltered information source that comes directly from stakeholders may help inform and focus strategic decision-making on the direct needs of the community.

This study consists of five chapters in which I detail my qualitative phenomenological research and present my findings on the potential use of SM to improve decision-making in nonprofit organizations. In the first chapter, I provide a general overview of the study, beginning with background information. Then, I provide the problem statement, purpose of the study, the nature of the study, and research questions. I address the conceptual framework; provide definitions for key terms and consider the assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study. The chapter concludes with a summary of key points.

Background of the Study

Rapidly changing advances in online communication technologies are influencing and transforming the way in which organizations conduct business (Zhang & Yue, 2014). The Internet allows organizations to bring people together and capitalize and leverage talent in new ways. In the digital era organizational leaders have the opportunity to use multidirectional feedback channels to obtain information and direct feedback from stakeholders (Kurra & Barnett, 2016).

SM has the potential to affect practices within nonprofit organizations (Campbell, Lambright, & Wells, 2014) but has thus far been underused. For nonprofit organizations, the ability to sustain the future success of the organization is dependent on the ability to gain involvement of stakeholders in support of the organizational mission through creating positive stakeholder interactions and relationships (Paulin, Ferguson, Jost, & Fallu, 2014). Because nonprofit organizations serve and invest in the community, there is an obligation to meet the needs of local stakeholders affected by the directors’ decisions

(Parris, Bouchet, Peachey, & Arnold, 2016). In a nonprofit context, board members make decisions and act in the interest of stakeholders (Willems et al., 2015); however, according to researchers, board members continue to be isolated in the boardroom (Freiwirth, 2017), and dialogue with stakeholders remains unaddressed (Sundstrom & Levenshus, 2017). The use of Facebook and Twitter as a two-way communication platform allows for stakeholders to voice their opinions and to contribute to organizational knowledge that can drive decision-making (Auger, 2013; Goldkind, 2015). Yet, nonprofit boards may underutilize this tool.

A new opportunity, therefore, exists for nonprofit boards to use SM as a tool for decision-making. For the board to have the ability to make effective decisions, board members need to review additional sources of information other than the internal perspective of the chief officer and directors of the organization (Bruni-Bossio, Story, & Garcea, 2016; Kenagy, Fox, & Vollrath, 2013). Board members need to consider current, real-time feedback when making organizational decisions (Kenagy et al., 2013; Sundstrom & Levenshus, 2017). SM has the potential to meet this need as it allows for an alternative form of collecting data to supplement and inform traditional data sources, which can benefit the organizations and communities by generating options and solutions that may not be as accessible by means of conventional and traditional data collection methods.

Today, nonprofit leaders may use SM platforms beneficially to attract a larger following, gain awareness of the social issues that are important to stakeholders, and be more effective in crafting solutions by combining efforts of the organization and its stakeholders. Although Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 technologies are available, many nonprofit organizations are not embracing the 2.0 technologies that allow for increased engagement and two-way communication (Auger, 2013; Sundstrom & Levenshus, 2017). Nonprofit organizations have been slower to integrate SM practices than those organizations in the for-profit sector (Waters, 2009), and static websites remain the preferred method of online communication (Waters & Feneley, 2013). With new communication technologies available, organizations that understand how to leverage SM's increased connectivity opportunities have the potential to extend their organizational reach (Huang et al., 2016). Still, many nonprofit board members do not consider the long-term view of how SM platforms can contribute to various aspects of organizational strategy (Campbell et al., 2014) or consider how to use SM as a tool to increase organizational performance and effectiveness.

Even with SM's potential benefit of increasing organizational reach and interactions with stakeholders (Milde & Yawson, 2017), results from previous studies indicate that nonprofit organizations are deficient in SM skills, are not equipped to use SM resources, lack training, do not understand the benefits of SM, and refuse to adopt SM practices (Huang et al., 2016). Many organizations continue to rely on outdated management concepts, resulting in a need for organizations to adapt business models in response to the shifting business context (Ketonen-Oksi, Jussila, & Kärkkäinen, 2016). This adaptation includes the use of SM to its fullest potential. Although scholars have focused on the role of the board and how a board can operate as an effective unit for making strategic organizational decisions (Jaskyte, 2012), a lack of information exists about the decision-making processes used by nonprofit boards (Stevenson & Radin, 2015). In reviewing the literature, I also found that a gap of knowledge exists on board use of SM such as Facebook and Twitter to access the views of stakeholders when making decisions. If nonprofit board members have a better understanding of how their organizations can use SM platforms as two-way communication channels, they may be better able to gain insights from stakeholders when making strategic organizational decisions.

Problem Statement

With the advances in online technology allowing for dual communication, SM give organizations the potential to interact with stakeholders in new ways (Al-Menayes, 2014). As highlighted by Campbell et al. (2014), using SM can alter traditional nonprofit management practices. One of these areas of change is the way in which nonprofit organizations can incorporate the experience and feedback of stakeholders into strategic decisions. Even though 93% of nonprofit organizations use some form of SM to engage with stakeholders (Guo & Saxton, 2014), research by Blaschke and Veh (2015), Campbell et al. (2014), and Coombes, Morris, Allen, and Webb (2011) suggests that nonprofit organizations have a narrow, limited view of the potential use of SM platforms and do not consider the long-term view on how the use of SM platforms can engage stakeholders to inform organizational decision-making. The general problem was that nonprofit organizations are not using all the tools and information available when considering organizational decisions (Kenagy et al., 2013). The specific problem was that nonprofit organizations are missing an opportunity to further inform the organizational decision-making process with the information generated from SM.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to gain an understanding of SM potential use for decision-making in nonprofit organizations. Using an interpretive hermeneutical phenomenological approach, I obtained information on how nonprofit organizations use the information generated by SM in decision-making by interviewing 25 board members and leadership from nonprofit organizations in the state of Texas that engage with stakeholders through SM platforms. The aim of the study was to identify ways SM is used for organizational decision-making by capturing the unique experiences of nonprofit board members and leadership related to their organizations' use of SM.

Research Questions

The research question for this study was, What is the experience of nonprofit board members in relation to the use of social media for organizational decision-making and stakeholder engagement?

Conceptual Framework

Theory-based frameworks for analyzing SM use within nonprofit boards for decision-making purposes are lacking, according to Stevenson and Radin (2015). As such, I used a multi lens theory perspective that was informed by nonprofit and SM literature to guide this investigation. The primary conceptual framework for this qualitative study exploring nonprofit SM use was Parmar et al.'s (2010) updated version of stakeholder theory focusing on the stakeholders' involvement in decisions, information sharing, ethics, and value creation as it relates to strategic organizational decisions. Although stakeholder theory offers some principles of application, different approaches apply to different organizations (Bridoux & Stoelhorst, 2014). Therefore, to further inform stakeholder theory, the concept of organizational ambidexterity (Palm & Lilja, 2017) provided additional support. Palm and Lilja (2017) determined nine factors that contribute to organizational ambidexterity:

- organizing to serve the situation,
- having supportive management,
- allowing for dialogue,
- using ambassadors,
- creating a culture that allows mistakes,
- budgeting for exploration and exploitation,
- examining the system view,
- focusing on implementing innovations, and
- providing incentives for exploration and exploitation.

The nine elements of organizational ambidexterity served as the framework for the literature review in Chapter 2 on the use of SM to inform nonprofit board decision-making.

In addition, I applied Goldkind's (2015) adaptation of Brandtzaeg's (2010) unified media-user typology framework to the selection of potential nonprofit organizations and the recruitment of individuals to participate in the study. The media-user typology framework, which was developed from a meta-analysis of user typologies, provides a description and classification of SM users according to similarities in patterns of user frequency, activity, and content preference (Brandtzaeg, 2010). Thus, the media-user typology framework allows academics and practitioners to categorize user behaviors and usage patterns to increase understanding of social implications specific to new media and to respond to user patterns and behaviors (Brandtzaeg, 2010). In the Chapter 2 literature review, I further elaborate on stakeholder theory, organizational ambidexterity, and the unified media-user typology framework.

Nature of the Study

SM and its use in nonprofit organizations is an understudied phenomenon (Kluemper, Mitra, & Wang, 2016). This study involved the use of a qualitative phenomenological research approach to explore the phenomenon of SM and its use in nonprofit decision-making. Specifically, the study involved an interpretive hermeneutical phenomenology application of Vagle’s (2014) postintentional phenomenological research approach and five-component process for conducting research (exploring the phenomenon in varied contexts, using a flexible data collection process, incorporating a postreflection plan, using data systematically in the analysis, and crafting a response and exhibiting the phenomenon in varied contexts). The goal of a postintentional phenomenology research design is “to capture tentative manifestations of the phenomenon as it is lived –not use existing theories to explain or predict what might take place” (Vagle, 2014, p. 124). Therefore, using this method allows for openness and creativity to study the phenomenon’s limitless possibilities by creating an inquiry of study without imposed boundaries (Vagle, 2014).

A qualitative phenomenological method was appropriate for my investigation because it concerned the phenomenon of SM and data collected by interviewing 25 nonprofit board members and leadership were used to capture their experience related to the phenomenon. The study included nonprofit organizations that engage stakeholders through SM platforms. A hermeneutical phenomenology method applied to researching the interactions and experiences of the participants in relation to the phenomenon of SM. Nonprofit board members and leader selection depended on the member’s participation and engagement in board meetings and organizational decisions. A purposeful sample consisted of 25 board members and leaders from nonprofits in Texas. Data obtained about the phenomenon of SM resulted from interviewing 25 nonprofit board and leaders and eliciting their experience related to the phenomenon. Interviews of board members continued until the nature of the emerging themes did not change as a result of new interviews, thus indicating data saturation (Green & Thorogood, 2009).

Building on previous research from Goldkind (2015), open-ended interviews of the participants focused on current and future organizational use of SM in decision-making, the challenges and opportunities for SM use, and ways of measuring the effects of SM use on decision-making. Each aspect of the research study followed ethical practices. Participation in the study was voluntary, and information obtained by the participants was kept confidential. An informed consent and disclosure advised participants of their rights, protection, and confidentiality. A written agreement with the organization documented the nature of the work conducted. Each participant involved signed a consent form that included (a) a personal disclosure related to the purpose of the study, (b) the use of the information and the voluntary nature of participation, and (c) a statement of confidentiality.

Consistent with my use of a postintentional phenomenological research approach, my role in the data analysis process was to take the raw data collected from the interviews and use phenomenological reduction, otherwise known as the bracketing approach, to search for the meaning and essence of the phenomenon (Vagle, 2014). Therefore, there was a review of the information obtained through the individual interviews using a bracketing approach to identify categories, keywords, phrases, sentences or groups of sentences to provide representation and interpretation of the material. I then compared all materials to identify an essence that underlies the phenomenon of SM use for nonprofit decision-making.

Definitions

Definitions from the literature for the terminology used in this study follow.

Board processes: Board processes are activities used by board members related to organizational decision-making (i.e., information exchange, reviewing pertinent information, participation in discussions, independent research, collegiality, receiving feedback, etc.) according to Zhu, Wang, and Bart (2016).

Governance: Governance is the direction, control, and accountability provided to an organization by its board of directors (BOD) inclusive of organizational structures and member roles (Buse, Bernstein, & Bilimoria, 2016).

Organizational ambidexterity: Organizational ambidexterity refers to an organization's ability to engage in quality improvement of current processes through innovation and creativity as well as exploring new opportunities and tools to meet the demands of the current situation (Palm & Lilja, 2017).

Participatory process: Participatory process refers to the formalized interactions with stakeholders for decision-making considerations (Mosley, 2016).

Web 1.0: Web 1.0 refers to static web pages on the Internet lacking an interactive component (Waters & Feneley, 2013).

Web 2.0: Web 2.0 refers to media channels on the Internet offering the potential for two-way communication, interaction with viewers, and user-created content as found in social networking sites (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, etc.), blogs, and podcasts (Kasavana et al., 2010; Kluemper et al., 2016; Waters & Feneley, 2013).

Assumptions

There are four assumptions for consideration. First, the organizations involved in the study had an interest in two-way communication with their stakeholders to gain feedback to inform organizational decision-making. While it is common practice in business to use familiar and process and operate in a business-as-usual fashion, using time-tested methods (Wukich & Mergel, 2016), SM offers new channels and greater stakeholder reach of gaining information and data to inform services, ideas, and products (Dehghani & Tumer, 2015). Second, nonprofit organizations wanted to leverage SM as an alternative, less-costly way to gain market insight from two-way communication with its stakeholders to inform decision-making (Dehghani & Tumer, 2015).

Third, the organizations used in the study had stakeholders that wanted to engage with the organization using online mediums. SM is most effective for an organization if it can engage its stakeholders in the conversation (Jiang, Luo, & Kulemeka, 2016). As the selection criteria for the organizations involved in the study classified the organizations as an advanced user per Goldkind's (2015) adaptation of Brandtzaeg's (2010) unified media-user typology framework, this indicated that the organization actively used SM communication on a consistent basis (i.e., at minimum participating in one-way SM messaging); however, while nonprofit organization can create online platforms and use SM as a way to communicate with stakeholders, it does not imply that there is a stakeholder following of individuals or an online audience engaged with the organization (i.e., at minimum viewing the communication). Evidence of an online audience manifested in the form the online audience behavior of liking, commenting, and sharing the organizations' information (Huang et al., 2016).

Fourth, the use of SM allowed the nonprofit organization to capture a different stakeholder perspective to contribute to the quality of organizational decisions. In a study to understand the online communication preferences of stakeholders, Johannessen, Saebø, and Flak (2016) concluded that not all stakeholders use SM equally. Stakeholders with higher salience may not participate in SM, whereas those stakeholders with less salience may be more inclined to use the SM to voice their perspectives (Johannessen et al., 2016). Therefore, in addition to the views of the board of directors, executive directors, and organizational staff, the use of SM has the potential to capture a different, underrepresented, and less salient population of stakeholders. While having a variety of connections with varied perspectives can broaden the understanding of a situation (Flynn & Wiltermuth, 2010), these varied perspectives do not guarantee better or more productive results (Steele & Derven, 2015).

Scope and Delimitations

This study involved the use of a purposeful sample of 25 board members and leaders from nonprofit organizations in Texas. Selection of organizations depended on the following criteria: the nonprofit organizations (a) had a valid 501(c)(3) designation and filed an IRS Form 990 if required; (b) had been in operation for a minimum of 5 years; (c) had board members serving on a voluntary basis and were not receiving any compensation for their time and contributions; and (d) currently used some form of SM and was an advanced user per Goldkind’s (2015) adaptation of Brandtzaeg’s (2010) unified media-user typology framework. Evidence of an organization’s stakeholder following and an online audience manifested in the form of the online audience behavior of liking, commenting, and sharing the organization’s information (Huang et al., 2016). Solicitation of organizational participation in the study occurred by contacting executive directors through physical mail, e-mail, and phone solicitation and invited the organization to participate in the study. After the selection nonprofit organizations occurred, recruitment of board members and leaders to participate in the study occurred.

In addressing the delimitations to the study, as research by Manetti and Toccafondi (2014) showed that the lack of stakeholder representation in nonprofit organizations was a global concern and not just restricted to the U.S., the study had the potential to be a global investigation rather than just focusing on nonprofit organizations in Texas. Since Facebook and Twitter are the more common SM platforms used by nonprofit organizations, the choice of investigating these platforms prohibited a global investigation as there are countries that restrict the use of Facebook and Twitter and use alternative SM platforms (Gao, 2016). Therefore, the boundary of the investigation was set to focus on the U.S. and specifically Texas nonprofits. As various regions can have different practices, view, and perceptions, researching one region may have the potential to limit these influencing factors. Uzonwanne (2016) conducted previous research focused on decision-making and nonprofit executives in Texas, and this research can further build on the nonprofit decision-making of the leaders in Texas by incorporating the element of SM.

Limitations

There are three potential limitations. First, researchers' worldviews, assumptions, perspectives, and background could influence the perception of information as it related to the phenomenon (Vagle, 2014). Therefore, I needed to consider my personal experiences and worldviews and how these areas affected the research. As advised by Vagle (2014) when conducting postintentional phenomenology, I created an initial postreflection journal and captured my viewpoints as they related to the phenomenon and continually revisited the initial statements and had an ongoing process of postreflexing throughout all stages of the study. Also, to further address the subjective nature of qualitative studies, I used a triangulation of data inclusive of researcher notes, interview transcripts, and other journal articles and scholarly literature to inform the findings.

The second limitation was that the study is specific to Texas nonprofit organizations and the findings are only from the perception of nonprofit board and leaders and do not consider the perception of the stakeholders who will be using SM to dialogue with the organization. As different regions can have different responses due to varied cultural contexts (Raja-Yusof, Norman, Abdul-Rahman, Nazri, & Mohd-Yusoff, 2016), having a study specific to Texas nonprofit organizations created a geographic limit and answers to interview questions may have had regional influencers. Using a nation-wide sample or a global sample could have provided more information. Also, as the study findings are only from the perception of nonprofit board members and leaders and do not include the perceptions of other individuals that may be involved in the organization's decision-making process (i.e., managers, volunteers, etc.), this could potentially affect the results of the study as these members may have biased opinions based on personal experiences or their positions within the organizations.

The third limitation was that the study used Facebook and Twitter as the primary investigative source for SM use in nonprofit organizations, which therefore limits the findings to geographic regions where Facebook and Twitter are accessible. The popularity of SM sites varies from country to country (Kasavana et al., 2010), and there are some countries where Facebook and Twitter are not present such as China which uses Weibo, a micro-blog comparable to Twitter (Gao, 2016). As SM platforms have different uses, it was not feasible to generalize application to all platforms (Etter & Vestergaard, 2015). Even though limiting the study to Facebook and Twitter excluded application to those countries where Facebook and Twitter do not exist, there are other comparable SM platforms used in other regions (i.e., Twister, Soup, HelloWorld, Gnu social, rstat.us, Lorea, and Diaspora, etc.) where study findings may be applicable (Gehl & Synder-Yuly, 2016).

Significance of the Study

This research may reduce a gap in understanding how the leaders in nonprofit organizations can use SM to contribute to nonprofit organizational decisions. This project is unique as it addresses the underutilization of two-way communication platforms, like Facebook and Twitter, that can allow stakeholders to voice their thoughts and feedback to contribute to organizational knowledge that can drive nonprofit decision-making (Auger, 2013; Goldkind, 2015).

Significance to Practice

Even with the potential benefit of increasing the organizational reach and interactions with stakeholders, results from previous studies indicated nonprofit organizations are deficient in SM skills and not equipped to use the resources, lack training and understanding of the benefits of SM, and refuse to adopt SM practices (Huang et al., 2016). If nonprofit board members have a better understanding of how the organization can use SM in decision-making, then they would be in a better position to use SM platforms as a two-way communication channel to gain insights from stakeholders allowing further guidance in making strategic organizational decisions. The potential contribution to social change is to deepen the understanding of the effects of SM on nonprofit board decision-making so that boards can be more responsive to the broader social interests of their stakeholders. Having an unfiltered information source that comes directly from stakeholders, can help inform and focus strategic decision-making on the direct needs of the community. Findings from the study might improve theory and practice as there will be a further understanding as to how nonprofit organizations can leverage SM to extend their organizational knowledge.

Significance to Theory

As studies on nonprofit organizations and SM are relatively new, with the first major study occurring in 2008 (Goldkind, 2015), the results of this study may provide information to help nonprofit organizations inform decision-making that is more inclusive of the needs and interest of the communities they serve. New insights gained from sharing research results at the academic and practitioner level, can affect the future management and leadership of the nonprofit industry and individual organizations. The findings may have implications for nonprofit board research and practice related to the inclusion of SM to broaden social interests.

Significance to Social Change

As new online communication technologies of SM continue to increase connectivity among the masses (Milde & Yawson, 2017), nonprofit organizations are gaining new ways to interact with stakeholders to inform decision-making (Al-Menayes, 2014). Traditional ways of connecting with stakeholders are expanding through platforms such as Twitter and Facebook which give individuals increased personal influence to advance social issues important to the respective individual and their surrounding community. In gaining perspective of different people with different mindsets through the use of SM, SM can provide nonprofit organizations with a platform for affecting social change. Organizations that understand how to leverage SM have the potential to extend their reach to connect with stakeholders (Huang et al., 2016), thus allowing for more data to inform organizational decision-making. In using the information and feedback generated from SM, the organization has the potential to learn from the experiences of others.

If nonprofit board members have a better understanding of how the organization can use SM in decision-making, then they would be in a better position to use SM platforms as a two-way communication channel to gain insights from stakeholders allowing further guidance in making strategic organizational decisions. Using SM to inform decision-making creates a human-centered design allowing for an alternative way that nonprofit organizations can design programs and services (i.e., from the point-of-view of the people served) to meet the needs of the community (Freiwirth, 2017). Findings from the study might improve theory and practice as there will be a further understanding as to how nonprofit organizations can leverage SM to extend their organizational knowledge. In considering the contribution to the study on positive social change, finding from the research can helping nonprofit leaders and decision-makers capture and represent stakeholder views through real-time feedback from SM platforms. In having an unfiltered information source that comes directly from the stakeholders, this may help inform and focus strategic decision-making to the direct needs of the community.

Summary and Transition

In this first chapter, I provided a general overview of the study, presented an introduction and background of SM use in nonprofit organizations, identified the general problem that nonprofit organizations are not using all the tools and information available when considering organizational decisions (Kenagy et al., 2013), as well as the specified the specific problem of nonprofit organizations missing an opportunity to further inform the organizational decision-making process with the information generated from SM.

Then, as purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of SM and its potential use for decision-making in nonprofit organizations, I defined the nature of the study, presented the research questions, addressed the conceptual frameworks, stakeholder theory (Parmar et al., 2010), organizational ambidexterity (Palm & Lilja, 2017), and Goldkind’s (2015) adaptation of Brandtzaeg’s (2010) unified media-user typology framework, and provided definitions for the key terms related to the study. Next, I discussed four assumptions: (a) organizations having an interest in two-way communication with their stakeholders to gain feedback to inform organizational decision-making, (b) nonprofit organizations wanting to leverage SM to inform decision-making, (c) organizations having an online following of stakeholder, and (d) SM use allowing the nonprofit organization to capture a different stakeholder perspective to contribute to the quality of organizational decisions.

Lastly, I detailed the limitation, scope, and delimitations of the study and provided ideas on the significance of the study as it may relate to practice, theory, and positive social change. In the next chapter, I supply a detailed account of searching the literature for the literature review and provide relevant information from previous studies and literature on the topics of SM, nonprofit boards, and decision-making. Also, I elaborate further on the conceptual frameworks.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Illustrating the advances in online technology allowing for dual communication, SM give organizations the potential to interact with stakeholders in new ways (Al-Menayes, 2014). As highlighted by Campbell et al. (2014), using SM can alter traditional nonprofit management practices. One of the areas of change is the way organizations can incorporate the experience and feedback of stakeholders when making strategic organizational decisions. Even though 93% of nonprofit organizations use some form of SM to engage with stakeholders (Guo & Saxton, 2014), research by Blaschke and Veh (2015), Campbell et al. (2014), Coombes et al. (2011), and others suggests that nonprofit organizations have a narrow, limited view of the potential use of SM platforms and do not consider the long-term view on how the use of SM platforms can engage stakeholders to inform organizational decision-making. The general problem was that nonprofit organizations are not using all the tools and information available when considering organizational decisions (Kenagy et al., 2013). The specific problem was that nonprofit organizations are missing an opportunity to further inform the organizational decision-making process with the information generated from SM.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of SM and its potential use for decision-making in nonprofit organizations. Using an interpretive hermeneutical phenomenological approach, I obtained information on how nonprofit organizations use the information generated by SM in decision-making. I did so by interviewing 25 board members and leaders from Texas nonprofits whose organizations engaged with stakeholders through

SM platforms. The aim was to identify ways SM can contribute to organizational decision-making by capturing the unique experiences of nonprofit members related to their organizations' use of SM.

This chapter includes a detailed account of how I searched the literature for the literature review. The review includes relevant information from previous studies on the topics of SM, nonprofit boards, and decision-making. Also, I elaborate further on the conceptual framework and my use of the nine tenets of organizational ambidexterity (Palm & Lilja, 2017) to examine the incorporation of SM to inform nonprofit board decision-making.

Literature Search Strategy

As studies on nonprofit organizations and SM are relatively new, with the first major study occurring in 2008 (Goldkind, 2015), my primary review of academic journal articles focused on articles published between 2009 and 2018; however, I also examined earlier articles that offered varied perspectives and contexts as the information related to the evolution of SM and virtual online environments. To frame the value of SM use, I focused on SM use within nonprofit organizations but also reviewed literature related to business, government, and public organizations. Walden University Library provides access to peer-reviewed journals through its databases, and I used its databases first when performing a search. In selecting journals, I focused on the Business & Management database; however, because my topic crosses disciplines such as technology, human service, and social work, I conducted subsequent searches in these areas as well.

When performing an initial search, keyword searching was the default search method; however, subsequent searches also employed the Boolean operation. Keywords listed in articles included *social media*, *decision-making*, *stakeholders*, *nonprofits*, *board of directors*, *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and *online virtual environments*. Words such as *nonprofit* have multiple variations (i.e., *non-profit, non profit, NGO*) and, to account for this, I conducted multiple searches using the variations. Also, I reviewed relevant articles for alternative keywords to conduct further searches. In reviewing the literature, I noted that similar authors published on the various topics (i.e., Guo, Saxton, Waters, etc.). After identifying these key subject matter authors, I preformed individual searchers on the names of the authors to reveal other relevant works related to the topic.

Conceptual Framework

I used a multi lens theory perspective for this qualitative study exploring nonprofit SM use in nonprofit decision-making. The primary conceptual framework was Parmar et al.'s (2010) updated version of stakeholder theory focusing on the stakeholders' involvement in decisions, information sharing, ethics, and value creation as it relates to strategic organizational decisions. Although stakeholder theory offers some principles of application, different approaches apply to different organizations (Bridoux & Stoelhorst, 2014). I used the concept of organizational ambidexterity (Palm & Lilja, 2017) to provide additional support. In addition, I applied Goldkind's (2015) adaptation of Brandtzaeg's (2010) unified media-user typology framework for organizations to the selection of nonprofit organizations and the recruitment of board members to participate in the study.

Stakeholder Theory

When introduced in the 1960s, the term *stakeholders* referred to the stockholders of an organization (Parmar et al., 2010) and narrowly focused on profits and returns (Harrison & Wicks, 2013). As evolutionary context shaped the view of business and organizational responsibility and obligations to society, the term *stakeholders* broadened to include not only stockholders but also employees, customers, local communities, and other “constituency groups with which [business] transact and interact most frequently” (Carroll, 1991, p. 47). Then, in the 1980s and 1990s, stakeholder theory encompassed ideas surrounding value creation, ethics, and the managerial mindset (Parmar et al., 2010). In this updated definition, there is further consideration for the stakeholders’ involvement in decisions, allocations of resources, information sharing, ethics, morals in relation to how strategic business decisions affect society, the environment, and a businesses obligations as a business (Parmar et al., 2010).

Social media’s role in accounting for stakeholders. For nonprofit organizations, the ability to sustain the future success of the organization is dependent on its ability to gain involvement of its stakeholders in support of the organizational mission through creating positive stakeholder interactions and relationships (Paulin et al., 2014). As a result of a nonprofit organization’s dependency on maintaining outside support for the organizational work and cause, there is a need for nonprofit boards to consider stakeholder involvement, values, norms and expectations of society when making organization decisions (Carroll, 1991; Maxwell & Carboni, 2014). Even with the multiple iterations of stakeholder theory applied to business practices, Fotaki and Prasad (2015) noted that current business and management practices still do not recognize the wide range of stakeholders invested in organizations.

From studies on SM use and stakeholder engagement, organizations focused on six types of stakeholders: the mass media, consumers, investor/donors, employees, the government, and the community (Sriramesh, Rivera-Sánchez, & Soriano, 2013). While corporations and nonprofit organizations both use websites and SM to connect with stakeholders, each organization has a different approach to its marketing and uses websites and SM tools differently (Sriramesh et al., 2013). Bryer (2013) established five categories of SM stakeholder engagement levels including passive citizen, community defender, active follower, grassroots, champion, and global activist. In considering the categories of engagement, SM is most effective for an organization if it can engage its stakeholders in the conversation (Jiang et al., 2016).

Organizational Ambidexterity

As there are numerous ways in which stakeholder theory can apply to organizations, management, and business ethics (Harvey & Buckley, 2002), to further inform the study in the tenets of organizational ambidexterity will serve as the framework of using SM to inform nonprofit board decision-making. As the online environment evolves, organizations need to be agile, flexible and innovative in their operations and business practices (Shafiee, Razminia, & Zeymaran, 2016). As communication is one area that can link effective change and improve organizational performance (Kupritz & Cowell, 2011), nonprofit organizations need to create an organizational structure to maximize stakeholder interaction and communication. Palm and Lilja (2017) determined contribute to organizational ambidexterity:

- organizing to serve the situation,
- having supportive management,
- allowing for dialogue,
- using ambassadors,
- creating a culture that allows mistakes,
- budgeting for exploration and exploitation,
- examining the system view,
- focusing on implementing innovations, and
- providing incentives for exploration and exploitation.

The nine tenets of organizational ambidexterity served as the framework for the literature review discussing the use of SM to inform nonprofit board decision-making.

Unified Media-User Typology Framework

Using the media-user typology framework provided a technique for understanding SM usage and implications of SM use based on the study findings (Brandtzaeg, 2010). Brandtzaeg’s (2010) unified media-user typology framework provided a description and classification of SM users according to similarities in patterns of user frequency, activity, and content preference (Brandtzaeg, 2010). Goldkind’s (2015) adapted Brandtzaeg’s (2010) unified media-user typology framework to apply to organizational SM use. Thus, the media-user typology framework allows academics and practitioners to categorize user behaviors and usage patterns to increase understanding of social implications specific to new media and to respond to user patterns and behaviors by introducing new media services to improve user experience (Brandtzaeg, 2010). As noted by Goldkind (2015), the media-user typology framework is an appropriate tool as there are currently no other such frameworks. Using the media-user typology framework will provide a technique for understanding SM usage and implications of SM use based on the study findings (Brandtzaeg, 2010). In using the media-user typology framework, this allows for a "nuanced approach when investigating the association between media usage and social implications" (Brandtzaeg, 2010, p. 940). Application of the media-user typology framework offers guidance on community Human-Computer Interaction by organizing information into meaningful categories to better understand user patterns (Brandtzaeg, 2010).

Literature Review

As early as 2008, studies related to SM and management practices in nonprofit and public organizations emerged (Goldkind, 2015). As a tool for rapid communication, SM has the potential to revolutionize the way in which nonprofit organizations and stakeholders communicate (Goldkind, 2015). Currently, 93% of nonprofit organizations engage with stakeholders using SM (Guo & Saxton, 2014) to share organizational information (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012), fundraise (Auger, 2013; Goldkind, 2015; Wiencierz, Pöppel, & Röttger, 2015), advocate (Auger, 2013; Goldkind, 2015; Guo & Saxton, 2014), assist with human resource management (Kluemper et al., 2016), provide online messaging (Huang-Horowitz & Freberg, 2016), marketing (Killian & McManus, 2015; Saxton & Ghosh, 2016), and one-way communication methods for stakeholder engagement (Guo & Saxton, 2014; Jiang et al., 2016; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Saxton & Guo, 2014; Waters & Feneley, 2013). Online communication engagement platforms used by nonprofit organizations include websites, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, Google+, LinkedIn, and others (Richter, Muhlestein, & Wilks, 2014) with websites, Facebook and Twitter as the most popular engagement tools among nonprofits (Goldkind, 2015).

Starting with Web 1.0 opportunities, organizations generated interest and readership of stakeholders through websites (Dehghani, & Tumer, 2015). As Web 1.0 capabilities evolved to Web 2.0 SM platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (Sundstrom & Levenshus, 2017), new opportunities for organizations to connect and interact with stakeholders emerged. Now that Web 2.0 channels allow for dual-communication, organizations that use SM only as a one-way communication tool rather than a two-way communication channel are missing an opportunity to receive direct feedback from stakeholders (Auger, 2013; Blaschke & Veh, 2015; Bryer, 2013; Campbell et al., 2014; del Mar Gálvez-Rodríguez, Caba-Pérez, & López-Godoy, 2016; Fussell Sisco & McCorkindale, 2013; Goldkind, 2015).

Social Media Influence in Business

Rapidly changing advances in communication technologies are influencing and transforming the way in which organizations conduct business (Zhang & Yue, 2014). The Internet allows organizations to organize individuals, bring people together, and capitalize and leverage talent in new ways. As organizations move from face-to-face environments to an online virtual environment with geographically dispersed members, there is an opportunity for competitive advantage for organizations to cultivate and manage a wider audience (Bergiel, Bergiel, & Balsmeier, 2008). New Web 2.0 SM communication tools affect the way organizations communicate, collaborate, and network with stakeholders (Carroll, 2014).

With available Web 2.0 tools, organizations can obtain multi-directional feedback from internal and external stakeholders (Kurra & Barnett, 2016) and SM can affect organizational practices (Campbell et al., 2014) as the organization can receive non-restricted, unedited direct feedback from the various types of organizational stakeholders. SM creates opportunities for conversations and interactions that can transform business opportunities (Ketonen-Oksi et al., 2016) as the direct feedback from stakeholders is a resource for real-time patterns and behaviors (Ketonen-Oksi et al., 2016). While corporations and nonprofit organizations both use websites and SM to connect with stakeholders, each uses SM tools such as Facebook and Twitter differently (Sriramesh et al., 2013). While nonprofits have an advantage over for-profit organizations in gaining stakeholder endorsement through SM (Bernritter, Verlegh, & Smit, 2016), nonprofits are still slow to adapt to SM use (Waters, 2009).

SM platforms such as Twitter and Facebook allow organizations to generate interest and market with greater networks through word-of-mouth and viral marketing (Dehghani, & Tumer, 2015) with low associated costs and potentially high returns (Carroll, 2014; Dehghani, & Tumer, 2015). As SM allows organizations to capture the collective intelligence of its stakeholders (Turban et al., 2011), organizations can use SM platforms as leverage to market products, services, ideas, and garner support (Dehghani, & Tumer, 2015).

With new channels, organizations need to determine how best to use and manage the tools to benefit their organizational goals and missions. Even with Web 2.0 technologies offering increased stakeholder engagement and two-way communication, static one-directional websites remain the preferred method of communication for nonprofits rather than other forms of online engagement (Waters & Feneley, 2013). If nonprofit organizations used SM as a two-way communication tool for analysis to gain insight, the organization has the potential to use the data generated to drive growth and innovation and to improve meeting community needs.

Nonprofit Board of Directors and Social Media

The success of an organization depends on the effectiveness of its board (Nicholson, Newton, McGregor-Lowndes, & Myles, 2012). In a nonprofit organization, the BOD plays a vital role in the leadership, development, oversight, and operational functionality of the organization and serves as the governing entity (Zhu et al., 2016). The BOD provides the organization with leadership, strategic direction, governance, and ensures the accountability of the organization to the community that it serves (Buse et al., 2016). For a nonprofit organization, the BOD brings individuals together with personal knowledge and skillsets to assist in making organizational decisions (Coombes et al., 2011; Olinske & Hellman, 2017).

Research studies in management are increasingly focusing on organizational experiences to build applicable approaches inclusive of improving workplace performance (Singh, 2015). In efforts to increase organizational performance "individuals and groups/teams at many levels of the organization are given the tools and trust to make decisions that affect their work and the services/functions they provide" resulting in broader perspectives and input for decision-making purposes (Routhieaux, 2015, p. 142). As organizations continue to work towards increasing performance, Gleba (2014) predicted that business would use SM as an internal tool to connect workers, ideas, and information to share ideas, solve problems and increase decision-making abilities.

In making organizational decisions, nonprofits need to consider the wide variety of stakeholder affected by the decisions (Alcazar, Fernandez, & Gardey, 2013). The use of software tools can help with organizational decision-making as it can remove communication barriers, present decision models, and allow for pattern analyzation (Turban et al., 2011). SM has the potential to provide organizations with current, real-time feedback to consider when making organizational decisions (Kenagy et al., 2013; Sundstrom & Levenshus, 2017).

Nonprofit Board Decision-Making and Problem-Solving

In a rapidly changing environment, organizations are focusing on strategies to remain relevant, competitive, sustainable, and able to mitigate any future challenges. Uzonwanne (2016) conducted research focused on decision-making and nonprofit executives in Texas. Decision-making models examined included rational, intuitive, dependent, spontaneous and avoidant decision models, with rational decision-making as the top choice for older more experienced executives (Uzonwanne, 2016). As rational decision-making consists of researching logical solutions, alternatives (Uzonwanne, 2016), having quality data and information is an important element in the decision-making process.

In response to a changing environment, nonprofit boards need to respond to a wide range of stakeholders (Zhu et al., 2016). Stakeholders represent different groups that may have an interest in what decisions are determining, and therefore it is important to consider all stakeholders that may be affected directly or indirectly by the resulting outcomes. Understanding the benefit of organizational collaborations and maintaining stakeholder relationships can contribute to data for the organizational decision-making process. Models of open-strategic decision-making inclusive of transparency, inclusiveness, stakeholder legitimacy, and participatory decision-making (Pittz & Adler, 2016) are concepts and ideas that can apply to using SM as relates to organizational decision-making. As technology improves and changes, organizational leaders will need to determine how to use and incorporate these new technologies into their organizational structures (Staples & Zhao, 2006).

Challenges with Decision-Making

In a nonprofit BOD setting, there is a business-as-usual approach to problem-solving (Parris et al., 2016) and solutions to problems focus on organization structures and roles rather than on changes to the directors' approach (Bruni-Bossio et al., 2016). Current decision-making practices include board members accepting information without independent research (Bruni-Bossio et al., 2016; Zhu et al., 2016). Members are often resistant to change due to monetary costs and psychological factors (Parris et al., 2016). Challenges to board decision-making are in the areas of governance, boardroom isolation, and lack of information as it relates to governance and traditional organizational structure.

Governance. In both the nonprofit and for-profit sectors alike, due to scandals and individual acts of unethical conduct and misappropriations (Zhu et al., 2016), a need for increased governance, accountability, and transparency resulted (Routhieaux, 2015). Nonprofit governance practices need to meet stakeholder needs (Guo & Saxton, 2014). There is a lack of control in the nonprofit sector, and boards need more supports to help with governing, overseeing the organization, and decision-making (Byers, Anagnostopoulos, & Brooke-Holmes, 2015). Bruni-Bossio et al. (2016) identified five board governance models: traditional, policy, executive-led, constituent/representative board, and a contingency model. Even with decision-making models, there are systematic flaws within the governance of nonprofit boards including the selection and appointment of board members for organizational personal gains and connections rather than professional expertise, the volunteer nature of boards, and the potential for withholding of information from the CEO and organizational staff (Kenagy et al., 2013).

Also, as the board role is usually a secondary position for its members, the role may take less precedence than the members' primary role (Conger & Lawler, 2009). Mature relationships increase the opportunity for groups cohesiveness (Miricescu, 2015) and as board members may spend limited time together, there can be insufficient collegiality and challenges uniting as a team (Bruni-Bossio et al., 2016; Conger & Lawler, 2009; Zhu et al., 2016). Even as boards become more proactive in governing (Stevenson & Radin, 2015), there is still an underutilization of a two-way communication allowing stakeholders to voice their opinions and to contribute to organizational decision-making (Auger, 2013; Goldkind, 2015).

Isolation in the boardroom. In a nonprofit context, board members make decisions and act in the interest of stakeholders (Willems et al., 2015); however, members continue to remain isolated in the boardroom (Freiwirth, 2017) and dialogue with stakeholders remains unaddressed (Sundstrom & Levenshus, 2017). When making organizational decisions, there are often multiple stakeholders to consider in the decision process. Findings from the largest US study of nonprofit board chairs to date revealed that leadership was not engaging with stakeholders and board members remained isolated in the boardroom (Freiwirth, 2017). SM can act as the bridge between the isolated board members and the organization's stakeholders (Freiwirth, 2017; Sobaih, Moustafa, Ghandforoush, & Khan, 2016).

Lack of information. Even with the various sources of information available provided by SM, there is a lack of information presented to the board, and board members are not reviewing all relevant organizational information when considering organizational decisions (Kenagy et al., 2013). In order to make quality decisions, boards need to review relevant and current information (Zhu et al., 2016) and should review additional sources of information other than the internal perspective of the chief officer and directors of the organization (Bruni-Bossio et al., 2016; Kenagy et al., 2013). Conger and Lawler (2009) discussed the challenges of "hub and spoke" leadership tendency where one individual, usually the CEO, directs the meetings and takes on the main leadership role limiting the other members' effect (Conger & Lawler, 2009). One key piece of information not considered as a part of organization information is the information generated from stakeholders via the two-way communication channel of SM platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. With one individual taking on the leadership role, information is accepted by other members without fully researching (Bruni-Bossio et al., 2016; Zhu et al., 2016).

Incorporating Social Media to Inform Decision-Making

As business climates change to adapt to the digital age, nonprofit operations and business practices need to evolve as well. Palm and Lilja (2017) determined that nine factors contribute to organizational ambidexterity:

- organizing to serve the situation,
- having supportive management,
- allowing for dialogue,
- using ambassadors,
- creating a culture that allows mistakes,
- budgeting for exploration and exploitation,
- examining the system view,
- focusing on implementing innovations, and
- providing incentives for exploration and exploitation.

From this list of nine factors that contribute to organizational ambidexterity, there are linkages to SM use to inform nonprofit decision-making.

Organizing to serve the situation. As there are many online communication technologies available, the challenge for organizations becomes determining the best-suited infrastructure to support their organization. New forms of structural organizing using SM as a participatory process can contribute to board problem-solving abilities (Mosley, 2016; Puranam, Alexy, & Reutzig, 2014). Alternative forms of structural organizing inclusive of SM can add promising benefits of linking to stakeholders that may not be as accessible when compared to their conventional systems. An alternative form of organizational organizing, as explained by Puranam et al. (2014) considers stakeholder involvements, partnership, and goals met through collaborations. Rather than confining the problem-solving mechanism to an in-house function, using SM as an open source model allows for the masses to contribute solutions that may differ from those solutions identified by the organization.

As online environments are conducive to individual expression allowing for increased creativity and innovation (Parmar et al., 2010), incorporating SM use into the board's decision-making strategy by engaging stakeholders adds a human-centered design and an alternative organizational perspective (i.e., from the point-of-view of the people served) to meet the needs of the community (Freiwirth, 2017). For organizational structures conducive to a human-centered approach, organizations can consider interdisciplinary approaches, distributed intelligence, and social capital.

Interdisciplinary approach. An interdisciplinary structural approach to decision-making, inclusive of experts and stakeholders that each espouse various traits of leadership characteristics, may offer an alternative solution to benefit an organization more than the traditional reliance on the member-selected governing board. An interdisciplinary team approach allows instead for a joint collaborative effort to problem-solve (Van Baalen & Kartsen, 2012). In this method, groups of individuals to contribute ideas and solutions and drive the area of organizational focus on critical issues. Fenton (2012) stressed the benefit of a freedom-centered, democratic model, such as an interdisciplinary approach, which can serve as an alternative to a singular leader approach thus allowing individuals as members of a team the freedom to contribute to organizational and situational improvement. In using an interdisciplinary team approach to nonprofit leadership, organizations can benefit from combining individuals to exponentially increase the capabilities to achieve organizational goals (Staples & Zhao, 2006).

Distributed intelligence. As viewed in the nonprofit sector, organizations collaborate to provide best practices and solutions to long-standing social issues. With emerging technology linking organizations across the nation, organizations can collect, share, and more easily distribute information through online communication networks. Organizations can capitalize on social networks, interactions, and combined intelligence encapsulates the concept of distributed intelligence. Rather than solely relying on the member-selected governing board to handle a situation, a shared leadership approach can offer an alternative solution (Metcalf & Benn, 2013) as SM allows for a quickening of ideas and solutions oriented to problem-solving.

Social capital. Another structural support to optimize and increase the speed of the decision-making presented by Gu, Xie, and Wang (2016) is using top management teams (TMT) and internal social capital. For nonprofit boards, social capital can serve as decision aid tool in providing management with further information about their situation (Jansen, Curşeu, Vermeulen, Geurts, & Gibcus, 2011). In a study on social capital as it related to the initial conceptualization and implementation of a nonprofit, Scheiber (2014) identified that the specific members of the target population were the most important actors related to the initial conceptualization and implementation of a nonprofit organization or specific prevention program.

Having Supportive Management and Creating a Culture that Allows Mistakes

In nonprofit organizations, BOD provides the organization with leadership, strategic direction, governance, and ensures the accountability of the organization to the community that it serves (Buse et al., 2016). As the governing entity, nonprofit boards need to develop governance practices that meet the needs of stakeholders (Guo & Saxton, 2014) and create supports to help with organizational decision-making (Byers et al., 2015). As identified by Goldkind (2015), one of the main obstacles identified to the incorporation of SM use within nonprofit organizations is the willingness of board members to allow for its usage. Even with SM potential benefit of increasing the organizational reach and interactions with stakeholders (Milde & Yawson, 2017), results from previous studies indicated that nonprofit organizations are deficient in SM skills, not equipped to use SM resources, lack training, do not understand of the benefits of SM, and refuse to adopt SM practices (Huang et al., 2016).

For organizations, to be successful in using SM as a tool for decision-making, leadership will need to drive the efforts, embrace two-way dialogue, allow for collaborations, and realize that there is not a one-size-fits-all approach (Bruni-Bossio et al., 2016; Gleba, 2014). Success in the virtual environment requires a high level of trust between team members, the ability to communicate effectively, the support of leadership, and the incorporation of suitable technologies (Bergiel et al., 2008). Opportunities that emerged from the use of SM included an increase in job satisfaction, collaboration, communication value, and professional development (Liu, 2012).

For an organization to benefit from a diversity of perspectives, there needs to be an environment that is inclusive of individuals being able to express their opinions freely (Steele & Derven, 2015). As there can be both positive and negative results to cultural diversity within organization (Martin, 2014), in order to manage diversity for success of a global business, there needs to be a linkage between creating, managing, valuing, and leveraging diversity initiatives within the organization itself (Soldan & Nankervis, 2014). Leaders need to be able to tolerate and work in various states of ambiguity and be able to have an openness and ability to work outside of their comfort-levels about things being different and be able to learn continuously from the differences experienced (Hoffecker, 2016).

Allowing Dialogue and Using Ambassadors

Today's nonprofit leaders can benefit from SM platforms to attract a larger following of support, to further gain awareness of the social issues important to stakeholders, and to promote, enhance, and enable a larger effect on the solution due to combining efforts of the organization and its stakeholders. While Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 technologies are available, nonprofit organizations are not embracing the 2.0 technologies that allow for increased engagement and two-way communication (Auger, 2013; Sundstrom & Levenshus, 2017). Nonprofit organizations have been slower to adopt technology changes of integrating SM than those organizations in the for-profit sector (Waters, 2009), and static websites remain the preferred method of online communication (Waters & Feneley, 2013). With new communication technologies available, organizations that understand how to leverage SMs' increased connectivity opportunities have the potential to extend their organizational reach (Huang et al., 2016); however, nonprofit board members do not consider the long-term view of how SM platforms can contribute to various aspects of organizational strategy (Campbell et al., 2014) or consider how to use SM as a tool to provide the organization with providing real-time multi-directional feedback.

Providing real-time multidirectional feedback. There is a need for varied direction of feedback within an organization (Kurra & Barnett, 2016). Kurra and Barnett (2016) suggested implementing multi-directional feedback channels such as manager-to-employee, employee-to-company, and peer-to-peer within organizations. Building on this idea of feedback, stakeholder-to-company is another element to address.

In adopting the use of SM, nonprofit organizations can use the feedback generated from two-way communication with its stakeholders to help meet organizational missions and aid in positive outcomes and increased organizational effectiveness (Ketonen-Oksi et al., 2016; Raman, 2016). While it is common practice in business to use familiar and process and operate in a business-as-usual fashion, using time-tested methods (Wukich & Mergel, 2016), SM offers an alternative communication method and platform that focuses on people in addition to focusing on process. Using a multi-channel feedback approach strategy can ultimately lead to increased organizational performance as relationships are strengthen (Kurra & Barnett, 2016). Real-time, candid feedback can help align the organizations for development, growth, and performance, and increase individual, team and organizational efficiency (Kurra & Barnett, 2016).

With new online communication technologies further increasing connectivity among the masses (Milde & Yawson, 2017), there is a new opportunity for discussions on solution-making efforts. Traditional means are expanding through platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, media blogs and others, that also provide the individual with further personal influence to advance social issues important to the respective individual and their surrounding community. Organizations that understand how to leverage SM have the potential to extend their reach (Huang et al., 2016). Today's nonprofit leaders benefit from organizational platforms by attracting a larger following of support, gaining increased awareness of the social issues, and promoting, enhancing and enabling a larger effect on the solution due to combined efforts of the organization and its stakeholders. Other benefits of using SM included stakeholders becoming brand ambassadors and assisting in increasing organization visibility and reach through networking (Dreher, 2014).

Examining the System View

As technological advances add more complexity to the boundaries of public and private organizations, with the benefits of using new technology also comes challenges and potentially negative effects (Goede & Neuwirth, 2014). In using SM, organizations become a part of a wider social system (Lu, 2015) with new potential management risks. The potential risks associated with SM such as the continued relevancy of information, varied weighted perspectives, lack of control, and keeping stakeholder engaged may make the board less willing to utilize these tools (Lu, 2015).

The continued relevancy of information. As SM has revolutionized the scale and speed at which information is shared and spread, organizations are more concerned with displaying good governance, transparency, accountability, and confidentiality as well as gaining the trust of the organization's stakeholders (Goede & Neuwirth, 2014). When using SM as a decision-making tool, management will need to have the ability to manage enormous amounts of information and to configure relevant approaches for utilization. Due to the nature of the rapidly changing SM climate, information may become outdated and obsolete as the SM platforms continue to grow and evolve rapidly over time (Killian & McManus, 2015). With more alternatives, decisions become harder to make, and organization becomes limited by their ability to process large quantities of information (Matzler, Uzelac, & Bauer, 2014). In moving forward, organizations will need the ability to manage relevant information and be able to configure for utilization. Also, with SMs' ability to rapidly disseminate information, there is the potential that the information does not originate from credible sources and may not have the support of factual evidence (Farias, Paskor, & Block, 2015).

Varied weighted perspectives. In a study to understand the communication preferences of stakeholders and address how this relates to affecting the public sphere, Johannessen et al. (2016) concluded that not all stakeholders used SM equally. Stakeholders with higher salience may not participate in SM, unlike those stakeholders that have less salient levels (Johannessen et al., 2016). Therefore, there are online personalities that are stronger than others (Etter et al., 2015; Guidry et al., 2014) and there can be different cultural context and activities with a different focus (Raja-Yusof et al., 2016). Also, it is important to consider that while nonprofit organization can create online SM platforms, if there is not a reciprocal engagement with an audience then investing in SM can become more of a cost than a benefit.

Lack of control. Unscripted conversations on SM could be a risk factor for organizations as it puts the organization in a position of giving up control of content and information presented on the platforms (Guidry, Waters, & Saxton, 2014). One problem with the use of SM is the negative commentary from external users that can taint the decision-making (Kasavana et al., 2010). Allowing a two-way communication dialogue opens the potential for external users to make inappropriate posts (Richey, Ravishankar, & Coupland, 2016) which could result in consequences such as negative press and increased organizational scrutiny (Ward & Edmondson, 2015). Another perspective on SM is that using this medium can lead to socialism and socialistic characteristics (Farias et al., 2015).

Keeping stakeholders engaged. In a study to gain an understanding of millennials and their motivations and engagement levels with organizations in an online setting, Rissanen and Luoma-Aho (2016) determined millennials were not enthusiastic about online engagement as previous studies eluded. As millennials will become more prevalent stakeholders as time progresses, there needs to be further research on how to best engage with this population in an online setting (Rissanen & Luoma-Aho, 2016). According to Lim, Hwang, Kim, and Biocca (2015), SM provides organizations with alternative engagement use to maintain relationships and interactions with stakeholders through three dimensions of SM engagement–functional engagement, emotional engagement, and communal engagement.

As offered by Sutherland (2016), nonprofit organizations wanting to maintain stakeholder relationships can create a propinquital loop to enhance both online and offline experiences for stakeholders as well as to encourage ongoing stakeholder support. The propinquital loop comprised of three stages: SM environment, offline environment, and the return to the SM environment (Sutherland, 2016). The engagement with stakeholder, both online and offline, can increase the chance of success with cultivating and maintaining engaged organizational stakeholder. Also, using SM sites in conjunction with one another can result in greater ratings and engagement with stakeholders (Fussell Sisco & McCorkindale, 2013).

Exploration, Innovation, and Implementation

As business climates change, organizations need to adapt their operations and business practices to remain relevant and provide value creation (Ketonen-Oksi et al., 2016; Shafiee, Razminia, & Zeymaran, 2016). Technologies link organizations and people across traditional boundaries, and this allows for a sharing and dissemination of data through networks allows ideas to span a larger reach (Lu, Watson-Manheim, Chudoba, & Wynn, 2006). As noted by Parmar et al. (2010), the involvement of stakeholder and information sharing are key determinates in value creation and collaboration and becomes a powerful source of driving creativity, imagination, and innovation within the organization.

Exploration. According to Zhu et al. (2016), there is a positive relation in organizational performance when there is active involvement in strategic decision-making. Thus, organizations can benefit from information and communication technologies (ICTs) and SM by adopting SM practices and community engagement to meet organizational missions to aid in positive outcomes and increased organizational effectiveness (Raman, 2016). Kovner (2014) proposed the need for evidence-based management (EBMgmt) practices within nonprofit organizations to allow for more informed decision-makers. EBMgmt practices supply a six-step structural process to the process of decision-making focusing performance, quality, and access (Kovner, 2014). Currently, the nonprofit sector does not utilize this practice due to a lack of awareness on EBMgmt practices, implementation costs, time commitments, and satisfaction with current and traditional decision-making strategies (Kovner, 2014).

Innovation. As data generated from SM can help organizations identify patterns and turn data insights into action, embracing SM and its ability to inform the organization through data, analytics, and artificial intelligence can help drive decision-making with the information provided from stakeholders. Using SM for decision-making purposes provides organizations the opportunity to generate solutions to organizational issues and enhance innovation that a homogeneous work group may not accomplish (Steele & Derven, 2015). Flynn and Wiltermuth (2010) suggested having varied perspectives to allows for a more comprehensive and broad understanding of the situation and can offer alternative ideas for competitiveness, profitability, and sustainability (Steele & Derven, 2015). SM tools, like Facebook or Twitter, can be leveraged an alternative way to market as is less-costly and has the potential to reach greater network through word-of-mouth and viral marketing (Dehghani, & Tumer, 2015). Also, SM allows organizations to capture the collective intelligence of its stakeholders (Turban et al., 2011), organizations can use SM platforms as leverage for market products, services, ideas, and support for nonprofits (Dehghani, & Tumer, 2015).

Implementation. As organizations are still in the process of developing standard operating procedures for SM use (Wukich & Mergel, 2016), they may be hesitant to allow access to user comments for fear that it will affect the organization's reputation and perceived trustworthiness (Wiencierz et al., 2015). For risk management practices and their internal policies and procedures, organizations, especially government organization, that may have more strict policies than other public or private companies, may not be as supportive of retweeting external content (Wukich & Mergel, 2016). Therefore, rather than using new channels of information from an individual citizen or other external sources, 93.7% of the information in the form of retweets originated from the government or nonprofit sources (Wukich & Mergel, 2016).

Summary and Conclusions

With the rapid advances in technology that have emerged over the last 30 years, it can be hard to predict and conceptualize what the future for management will resemble in the coming decades. Gleba (2014) predicted that the next wave of SM would bring more focus to using SM as an internal tool to solve problems, share ideas, and increase decision-making abilities; therefore, is necessary to increase the understanding of the phenomenon of SM and its potential use to improve decision-making in nonprofit organizations. It will be important for organizations and leaders to lead with specific intentions and to use and apply the knowledge that they have gained from their experiences (Carson, 2016).

As technology improves and changes, organizational leaders will need to determine how to use and incorporate these new technologies into their organizational structures (Staples & Zhao, 2006). Even with Web 2.0 technologies offering increased stakeholder engagement and two-way communication, static one-directional websites remain the preferred method of communication for nonprofits rather than other forms of online engagement (Waters & Feneley, 2013). Challenges to board decision-making are in the areas of governance, boardroom isolation, and lack of information as it relates to governance and traditional organizational structure. Advantages of virtual environments can allow for a wide range of talent recruitment and expanded opportunity for creativity and varying perspectives whereas limiting factors of virtual environment inclusive of generational gaps, lack of technology skills, variations of business types and organizational structures, and psychologically unsuited individuals (Bergiel et al., 2008). In the next chapter, I will outline the methodology and detail the process of conducting the phenomenological research on the phenomenon of SM and its potential use to improve decision-making in nonprofit organizations.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of SM and its potential use for decision-making in nonprofit organizations. Using an interpretive hermeneutical phenomenological approach, I interviewed board members and leadership from Texas nonprofits whose organizations engaged with stakeholders through SM platforms. The aim was to identify ways SM can contribute to organizational decision-making by capturing the unique experiences of nonprofit board members and leadership related to the organizations' use of SM. In this chapter, I outline the methodology and detail the process of conducting the phenomenological research using Vagle's (2014) postintentional phenomenological research approach and five-component process for conducting research.

Research Design and Rationale

The research question was, What is the experience of nonprofit board members' in relation to the use of social media for organizational decision-making and stakeholder engagement? SM and its use in nonprofit organizations is an understudied phenomenon (Kluemper et al., 2016). I used a qualitative phenomenological research approach to explore the phenomenon of SM and its use in nonprofit decision-making. Specifically, I used Vagle's (2014) postintentional phenomenological research approach and five-component process for conducting research (exploring the phenomenon in varied contexts, using a flexible data collection process, incorporating a postreflection plan, using data systematically in the analysis, and crafting a response and exhibiting the phenomenon in varied contexts).

Vagle’s (2014) research approach has a philosophical base, grounding, and agreement with other phenomenologists, but there is flexibility in design that allows for applying elements. The goal of a postintentional phenomenology research design is “to capture tentative manifestations of the phenomenon as it is lived –not use existing theories to explain or predict what might take place” (Vagle, 2014, p. 124). Therefore, using this method allowed for openness and creativity to study the phenomenon without imposing predetermined boundaries (Vagle, 2014). Because the research was about the phenomenon of SM and its potential use to improve decision-making in nonprofit organizations, I concluded that the phenomenological method was an appropriate research selection.

Another qualitative approach I initially considered was a meta-analysis. The purpose of conducting a meta-analysis is to analyze multiple findings from previous studies for patterns and generalizations. Studies on nonprofit organizations and SM are relatively new, with the first major study occurring in 2008 (Goldkind, 2015). There was not enough information, therefore, on the topic to conduct a meta-analysis because research on the topic is still in the process of development. A meta-analysis will be an alternative approach once there are more research and findings on record.

Role of the Researcher

In using a qualitative approach to research, the researcher is the key instrument of data collection and interacts with participants to understand and create meaning behind the phenomenon (Vagle, 2014). As the researcher and primary instrument of data collection and analysis and interpretation, I was transparent about professional relationships with the participants during the data collection and analysis process. I also sought to be transparent to those participating in the study and to those taking interest in its results and findings about my personal views and potential bias related to the topic.

For transparency about professional relationships with participants, I have over 20 years of experience working in the nonprofit sector. In September 2014, I cofounded a consulting business that helps nonprofits with solutions to the challenges associated with funding, mission-driven results, infrastructure, and strategic innovation for sustainability. The company provides services nationwide to both small and large organizations to help further community impact. While the company assists organizations with program design, evaluation plans, logic models, marketing materials, and board and stakeholder education, most of the service contracts focus on researching and writing funding proposals for federal, state, local, foundation, and corporate funders. Before cofounding the consulting company, I worked in a senior management position for a large nonprofit in Houston, Texas, overseeing the programs on the mission service of the organization. Because of my previous background, I have a large network of nonprofit organizations in the United States; however, this network extends to the executive directors and upper management of organizations and not to the members of their boards.

By having an awareness of personal values, beliefs, and biases, individuals can decrease the effects of these factors on the research topic studied (McCauley, 2014). Although personal values, beliefs, and biases cannot be eliminated from a qualitative study, having knowledge, awareness, and understanding of these factors can allow more focused attention on the way in which the research is being evaluated and conducted

(McCauley, 2014). When applying postintentional phenomenology, “it is critical that one resists binaries such as either-or thinking, right-wrong, normal-abnormal, and the rigidity that often continues after a binary begins to break down” (Vagle, 2014, p. 118). The use of a postreflection plan allowed for me to record and reflect on my thinking thoughout the research process so as to avoid any factors that could influence the data collection or data anlysis processes.

The role of the postintentional phenomenological researcher in the data analysis process is to take the raw data collected from the interviews and use phenomenological reduction, otherwise known as the bracketing approach, to search for meaning and essence of the phenomenon (Vagle, 2014). Therefore, I reviewed information obtained through the individual member interviews using a bracketing approach to identifying categories, keywords, phrases, sentences or groups of sentences to provide representation and interpretation of the material. I also compared all materials to attempt to identify an essence that underlies the phenomenon of SM use for nonprofit decision-making.

Methodology

In using a qualitative approach, researchers can gain insight and perspective of a phenomenon in its specific context (Vagle, 2014). For a phenomenological study, notable methodology guides that can provide the basis of the research design include Moustakas (1994), Vagle (2014), Van Manen (2014), among others. While Moustakas, Vagle, and Van Manen all present structures for conducting phenomenological studies, each methodologist have different approachs. Van Manen’s description of phenomenological research is exploring the lived experiences taken for granted whereas Vagle’s description of phenomenological research is “an encounter…a way of living…and a craft” (pp. 11-12). After reviewing Moustakas, Vagle, and Van Manen’s works, I selected Vagle’s postintentional phenomenological research approach for the methodology guide and Vagle’s suggested five-step process for conducting research (exploring the phenomenon in varied context, using a flexible data collection process, incorporating a postreflection plan, using data systematically in the analysis, and crafting a response and exhibiting the phenomenon in varied contexts). While the focus was Vagle’s postintentional phenomenology, the pedagogy of phenomenological philosophy and philosophies and theories of others who framed earlier works supplied contextual and situational understandings as well.

Participant Selection Logic

Participants included a homogeneous sample of nonprofit organizations to determine if there were underlying commonalities or themes (Vagle, 2014) related to SM use and organizational decision-making. The data collection involved interviewing 25 board members and leadership from 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations in Texas. Following previous studies (e.g., Fussell Sisco & McCorkindale, 2013; Guidry et al., 2014; Huang et al., 2016; Waters & Feneley, 2013), multiple sources provided information to determine the selection of organizations to approach for participation in the study including: The Urban Institute’s National Center for Charitable Statistics, the Texas Association of Non-Profit Organizations (TANO), *Nonprofit Times 100,* GuideStar, BoardSource, and Charity Navigator. Data from combined sources formed a final sample of nonprofits.

As noted by Vagle (2014) selected participants should have experience with the phenomenon such that during the interview process the participant can provide an abundance of information, rich descriptions, and varied perspectives and contexts on the phenomenon. A criterion-based sampling determined the selection of nonprofit organizations to approach for participation in the study. Organization selection depended on the following criteria: the nonprofit organization (a) had a valid 501(c)(3) designation and filed an IRS Form 990 if required; (b) had been in operation for a minimum of 5 years; (c) had board members serving on a voluntary basis and were not receiving any compensation for their time and contributions; and (d) currently used some form of SM and was an advanced user per Goldkind's (2015) adaptation of Brandtzaeg's (2010) unified media-user typology framework. In capturing the unique experiences of board and leadership related to SM and decision-making, the aim was to identify ways SM can contribute to the quality of organizational decisions.

As a method to determine the eligibility of nonprofit organizations selected to participate in the study, public documents such as the organizations IRS Form 990 provided evidence of criteria for the 501(c)(3) designation and its record of filing the IRS Form 990, the organization's established operation time, and the voluntary nature of the board members. A content review of the organization's Web 2.0 media verified that the organization currently used some form of SM, either Facebook or Twitter and showed frequent use thus meeting the classification as an *advanced* user per Goldkind's (2015) adaptation of Brandtzaeg's (2010) unified media-user typology framework. The definition of *frequent use* was that the organization is participating in using some form of SM platform, either Facebook or Twitter, at least once a week on a consistent basis.

Instrumentation

As the researcher is the key instrument in the data collection process, the process used by the researcher can serve as an integral basis of the information collected and analyzed. While effort and emphasis can be put into a systematic strategy for planning, with uncertain conditions, circumstances can play out in unexpected ways. In creating a positive interview experience, I engaged with participants to build a trust level and rapport, provided participants with clear information about the study and its purpose, asked open-ended questions, listened to participants, and collected correct and accurate content discussed by the participant.

As the interviewing process can affect the outcomes of the study, I was sensitive to the design and protocols used with the goal of collecting as much information as possible. Building on previous research from Goldkind (2015), open-ended interviews of the participants focused on current and future organizational use of SM in decision-making, the challenges, and opportunities for SM use, and ways of measuring the effects of SM use on decision-making. I developed a total of seven open-ended questions. Participants had the right to choose not to answer any or all of the interview questions and could request to withdraw from the study at any time. The participants had the opportunity to respond to the following questions:

1. Please describe your board’s organizational decision-making process and discuss how the organization collects and uses data to inform decisions?

2. Describe how the organization provides a representation and voice of stakeholders in organizational decisions?
3. Describe how is social media, specifically Facebook and/or Twitter used by your organization?

   -for fundraising

   -for service delivery

   -for policy advocacy
4. Describe/discuss what you think social media use is doing for your organization?
5. From your experience, how does your organization use data generated from stakeholders through Facebook and Twitter for decision-making?
6. From your experience, are there opportunities where information generated from social media by outside participants and stakeholders can be used to contribute to the organization?
7. What are the organizational barriers to incorporating the information generated from social media into organizational decisions?

Before the primary study, I conducted a pilot study to test the protocols, instructions, and information generated from the researcher-developed interview questions based on previous research from Goldkind (2015).

Pilot Study

When conducting postintentional phenomenological research, Vagle (2014) recommended using a pilot study as it allows for an opportunity to test the data gathering techniques and adjust protocols as needed. Therefore, to test the protocols, instructions, and information generated from the researcher-developed interview questions based on previous research from Goldkind (2015), I conducted a pilot study. The pilot study followed the techniques as described in the primary study for recruitment, participation, data collection, and analyzing data.

Recruitment followed the same criteria as the primary study and involve contact with executive directors made through the physical mail, e-mail, and phone solicitation to invite the organization to participate in the pilot study. For those organizations that agreed to participate, the executive director supplied a list of the contact information for their board members so I could make a personal solicitation to each member to participate in the study. Board members who agreed to participate in the interview process remained anonymous. The sample for the pilot study consisted of two participants. I informed these participants of the nature of the pilot study and that the information obtained was to serve as a trial and that the information obtained from their responses would remain separate from the primary study and not aggregated into the findings.

Just as with the primary study, before the interview for the pilot study, participants received an informed consent and disclosure to inform participants of their rights, protection, and confidentiality. Each participant involved signed a consent form that included (a) a personal disclosure related to the purpose of the study, (b) the use of the information and the voluntary nature of participation; and (c) a statement of confidentiality. Also, a Letter of Cooperation documented the nature of the work with the organization. The pilot study had written Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Walden University.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

In Vagle's (2014) postintentional phenomenology, while the research approach has a philosophical base and grounding and agreement with other phenomenologists, there is flexibility in design that allows for applying elements. While there is a wide range of qualitative methods to collect data, a common approach to qualitative data collection for postinternational phenomenological research includes interviewing (Vagle, 2014). The initial sample size was a minimum of 20 participants; however, the sample increased to 25 participants based on the emerging information collected (Vagle, 2014). Interviews of board leadership continued until the nature of the emerging themes did not change as a result of new interviews, thus indicating data saturation.

Recruitment. As noted earlier, selection of nonprofit organizations to approach for participation in the study depended on the following criteria: the nonprofit organizations (a) had a valid 501(c)(3) designation and filed an IRS Form 990 if required; (b) had been in operation for a minimum of 5 years; (c) had board members serving on a voluntary basis and were not receiving any compensation for their time and contributions; and (d) currently used some form of SM and was an advanced user per Goldkind's (2015) adaptation of Brandtzaeg's (2010) unified media-user typology framework. Once there was an identification of nonprofit organizations, there was a recruitment of board and leadership to participate in the study. Contact with executive directors was made through the physical mail, e-mail, and phone solicitation inviting the organization to participate in the study. For those organizations that agreed to participate, the executive director either supplied a list of the contact information for their board members so that I could make a personal solicitation to each member to participate in the study or sent out an internal e-mail to their board members asking them to contact the researcher directly if they had interest in participating. Members who agreed to participate in the interview process remained anonymous.

Participation. Individuals interviewed were board members and leaders from nonprofit organizations in Texas. Participation in the study was voluntary and consisted of responding to interview questions. Information obtained by the participants was kept confidential. Participation required approximately 40 minutes and participants had the right to withdraw from this study at any time. In the event of withdrawal from the study, information collected was not included in the analysis or results. Before the interview, participants received an informed consent and disclosure to inform participants of their rights, protection, and confidentiality. Each participant involved signed a consent form including (a) a personal disclosure related to the purpose of the study; (b) the use of the information and the voluntary nature of participation; and (c) a statement of confidentiality. Also, a Letter of Cooperation (see Appendix A) documented the nature of the work with the organization. The study had written IRB approval from Walden University (number 08-17-18-0547894**)**.

Participation included participating in a telephone interview. I conducted interviews using a telephone conference call service that provided a digital recording of the conversation. The Informed Consent form captured the participant's agreement to having the conversation recorded and transcribed for use in the study results. There were a total of seven open-ended interview questions (see Appendix B). Participants reserved the right to choose not to answer any or all the interview questions and could request to withdraw from the study at any time.

Data collection. When determining a data collection method, Vagle (2014) stressed that using multiple strategies can benefit the study and to blend or adapt research approaches as necessary to best suit meeting the data collection needs. Vagle supplied a 5-step process to consider when conducting research; however, emphasizing the flexible nature of the process and an adaptation of design elements, if necessary, that allow for best capturing the phenomenon. Interview questions followed a semistructured approach. Using a semistructured approach allowed for flexibility within the study for uncertain conditions and for situations to play out given the specific contexts and information developed based on the interaction with the participants. As there can be entirely different interpretations of occurrences leading to varied contexts of the phenomenon, secondary questions allowed for elaboration on varied contexts (Vagle, 2014).

At the conclusion of the interview, I reminded the participant of the review process and next steps of their participation, which included receiving access to a transcript of their audio recording and researcher notes taken throughout their individual interview and having the opportunity to review and make any corrections to the transcript. I reminded participants of the procedures for making corrections and reiterated that the information obtained would be coded to maintain confidentially. Finally, I reminded participants that there would be no compensation for participating in the research study; however, participants will receive a copy of an executive summary of the findings at the conclusion of the study as a form of nonmonetary compensation as well as a free year subscription to a funding newsletter.

From the digital recording of the interview, I transcribed verbatim the responses of each participant. Information obtained through the interview process was compiled with other participant responses to contribute to the findings of the project. Each participant had access to a transcript of their audio recording and notes taken throughout their individual interview and had an opportunity to review and make any corrections to capture an accurate representation of the information provided. Participants received the notes and transcription in an e-mail. If there are any corrections, the participants were asked to send an e-mail with the specific corrections to my e-mail address no later than 1 week after receiving the transcript. After the expiration of time to identify correction, all information collected was used in the analysis and contributed to the findings of the study.

Data Analysis Plan

The core elements of data analysis for this study included coding data, combining information into categories and themes, and making a representation of the data by compiling and comparing the information generated from the interview process. For each area of the process, I established protocols such that for each situation I had a consistent method of capturing and recording data that could later be analyzed and interpreted. In coding data, I identified areas of commonality and group items, distinguished patterns and created categories. Data sources used for analysis included conducting interviews, reviewing SM content, completing document analysis, and compiling field notes. To decrease the volume of data gained through the interviewing data collection method, I used phenomenological reduction, otherwise known as the bracketing approach, to search for meaning and essence of the phenomenon (Vagle, 2014). The first step was to review all of the information obtained through the individual member interviews using a bracketing approach to identifying categories, keywords, phrase, sentences or groups of sentences to provide representation and interpretation of the material. The next step was to make a comparison of all materials and attempt to identify an essence that underlies the phenomenon of SM use for nonprofit decision-making.

For coding, to decrease the volume of data gained through the interviewing data collection method, I used a bracketing approach identifying categories for keywords and phrases. In analyzing the content collected using the interviewing data collection method, I reviewed each sentence and assigned keywords to select sentences or groups of sentences to make a representation and interpretation of the material. Keywords consisted of topics such as personal description, characteristics, style, and others, to allow for a classification of the initial raw interview data. Once I determined keywords, a subset group under the keyword captured specific words and phrases used by the participants. For identifying categories for keywords and phrases, Goldkind's (2015) pre-determined themes assisted in organizing and classifying the initial raw interview data. While a pre-coding structure provided some initial support to the analysis, there was flexibility in assigning additional code if the information did not meet the determinations as set from the pre-coding structure.

Issues of Trustworthiness

As the goal of the research is to advance the body of knowledge, it is important to ensure the findings by providing evidence of quality, trustworthiness, and credibility to the research. As qualitative studies are judgment dependent, by following discipline standards and approach to methodology, verification, and validation of data, this can enhance the level of contribution to the topic of inquiry. While there is not a specific structure to follow, the minimum standards of discipline to the appropriate field will apply to the study.

To ensure quality, trustworthiness, and credibility of the project, I was transparent about the data collection and analysis process as well as transparent about my personal views related to the topic. In the analysis process, I reflected on the information obtained through the interviews and lessons learned to discover and help develop theory. In using reflection, this provided the potential to decrease the effects of any personal view on the research topic (McCauley, 2014). As a part of ensuring data validity, collecting data by using multiple sources (interviews, documents, observations, field notes, etc.) provided further verification and support of the findings and results.

Credibility

By collecting data using multiple sources such as interviews, field notes, and organizational documents, this helped ensure validity and credibility of the information collected to further support of the findings and results. To increase the clarity of the information collected in the interview process, I captured the information in an audio recording of the conversation as well as wrote personal notes. After the interview, the participant received a transcript of the audio recording and the interviewer notes and provided with an opportunity to review the information and make any corrections to capture an accurate representation of the information they provided. Providing the participants with an opportunity to review the information increased the credibility and confidence of accurately reflecting the participants' representations. Data collection continued until data saturation occurred. For this study, data saturation resulted when the major themes did not change because of new interviews.

Transferability

In following Vagle's (2014) postintentional phenomenological research approach and five-component process for conducting research, emphasizing exploring the phenomenon in varied contexts and crafting a response to the research that exhibits the phenomenon about the varied contexts. In selecting similar nonprofits within a similar geographic region, there was an effort to limit and answers to interview questions that may have regional influencers. While the selection of organizations follows criteria specific to U.S. nonprofits such as having a valid 501(c)(3) designation and files an IRS Form 990, there are similar classification that can apply to nonprofit organizations outside the U.S.

As SM platforms have different uses, it was not feasible to generalize application to all platforms (Etter et al., 2015). Therefore, in limiting the platforms to Facebook and Twitter, there was a narrower focus. Even though limiting the study to Facebook and Twitter excluded application to those countries where Facebook and Twitter did not exist, there were other comparable SM platforms used in other regions (i.e., Twister, Soup, HelloWorld, Gnu social, rstat.us, Lorea, and Diaspora, etc.) where study findings could be applicable (Gehl & Synder-Yuly, 2016). Therefore, the study may not transferrable to all countries.

Dependability

From the very onset of the research process, there was careful management and organization of information. To further document the process, I used an audit trail of the research process and provided justifications as to the methods used. As qualitative research can be subjective, it was important to report on all facets of process and procedures. In keeping a well-documented audit trail of the research process, this allowed for a justification as to the methods used and added credibility as there were further support and justification for the interpretation leading to the results.

Confirmability

In setting a clear framework of the research construction, this allowed for increased consistency and mitigated the risk of misinterpretation of the information and decreased the need for individual interpretation and varying points of view. Potential threats to the validity of the study included the environment and setting, participants, and structure and methods of collection. To confirm findings, the use of triangulation of data, performing peer reviews, negative case analysis, and identifying researcher bias provided further support of the confirmability and contributions of the study.

Ethical Procedures

Each aspect of the research study employed ethical practices. Participation in the study was voluntary. For the security of information collected, an informed consent and disclosure informed participants of their rights, protection, and confidentiality. Individuals in the study followed all laws and regulations related to the sharing and collecting of information, and all parties signed a written agreement documenting the nature of the work done and discussed the representation of the organization (see Appendix C for the confidentiality agreement). Data were kept secure by password protection and will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

For the collection of data, the selection of the sample size and the target population had considerations for selecting individuals without biases or restrictions of the population who benefited from the study. Individuals who participated in the study received and electronically signed a consent form that includes background on the study, a personal disclosure statement, and a statement of confidentiality. While analyzing the data, a journal provided a recording of researcher bias that could affect the study.

Summary

In this chapter, I outlined the methodology and detailed the process of conducting the phenomenological research using Vagle's (2014) postintentional phenomenological research approach and five-component process for conducting research. Also discussed was the methodology including the participant selection logic, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation, data collection, and the analysis plan, as well as detailing issues of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical procedures. The next chapter includes information on the study investigation, data analysis, and study results.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of SM and its potential use for decision-making in nonprofit organizations. Using an interpretive hermeneutical phenomenological approach, I obtained information on how nonprofit organizations use the information generated from SM for decision-making. The information came from interviewing 25 board members and leaders from Texas nonprofits whose organizations engaged with stakeholders through SM platforms. The aim of the study was to identify ways SM can contribute to nonprofit board organizational decision-making. The research question for this study was, What is the experience of nonprofit board members in relation to the use of social media for organizational decision-making and stakeholder engagement? In this chapter, I discuss the results of the pilot study, provide information on the research setting, detail information on participants, discuss the data collection and data analysis, and offer evidence of trustworthiness in relation to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study. I also detail the overall study results.

Pilot Study

To test the protocols, instructions, and information generated from the researcher-developed interview questions, I conducted a pilot study. The pilot study followed the same techniques as described in the primary study for recruitment, data collection, and data analysis. The information obtained from the pilot study participant responses remained separate from the primary study, and the information collected was not aggregated into the findings of the primary study. The sample for the pilot study consisted of two participants representing two different nonprofit organizations. I informed each participant about the nature of the pilot study and specified that the information obtained would only serve as a trial and practice of the data collection process and for testing the protocols, instructions, and information generated from the researcher-developed interview questions. The individuals who participated in the pilot study provided answers to the seven research-developed interview questions. After providing their answers to all the interview questions, they provided feedback on whether the questions were easy to understand and were in a logical order. I also asked the two participants if they had any other comments in relation to the overall process of the interview or other research engagement for the study.

From conducting the pilot study and testing the initial recruitment strategy for the overall study, I determined that I would need to make two requests for a change in procedure as well as add an additional nonmonetary incentive for organizations and individuals who participated in the study. For the first request for a change in procedure, I requested to change the predetermined criteria for selecting partner organizations, specifically to take out the criteria that the organization had to be listed as a human service organization as determined by the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities codes used by the IRS and National Center for Charitable Statistics to classify nonprofit organizations. In conducting the pilot study recruitment, I found that this classification system was not very consistent as organizations self-designate this classification and can list multiple National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities codes. Also, to increase my rate of response on soliciting partner agencies and participants for the study, I added the offer of a free year subscription to the weekly Funding 411 newsletter (a $600 value) to the recruitment process in order to peak interest of nonprofit executives to participate in the study and to pass the information onto their board members. An additional change in recruitment procedures as a result of the pilot study was requested to allow for interviewing with an interested individual who met the criteria but whose organization did not sign a Letter of Cooperation. In this situation, an informed consent form was used to document the consent of the individual.

Research Setting

The research setting for this study was a virtual environment encompassing the use of Internet sources for researching recruitment information and e-mail and SM to conduct the recruitment process. To obtain contact information for nonprofit executives, I researched and conducted searches on individual organizational websites as well as used public data information from websites such as GuideStar, association websites, and third-party compiled resource guides found online. To capture a balanced representation of cities across the state of Texas, I searched for potential organizations representing each area of the seven Texas regions including the Gulf Coast, Central Texas, the Panhandle, East Texas, and North Texas in cities spanning the State of Texas. Although nonprofit board members were the primary population target for this study, many nonprofit organizations did not list any contact information for their board members on their websites. I first contacted the organization’s chief executive officer. Once I identified an e-mail address for the chief executive officers, I sent an e-mail solicitation for request of participation.

Because individual response to the first solicitation letter was low, I sent a second solicitation letter out a week or two following the first initial solicitation letter to those organizations that did not respond with the first mailing. This message included an added opt-out clause if the contact did not want to receive any further communication about participation in the study. While many responses from this second solicitation e-mail were declines of participation, including this opt-out significantly increased the overall response rate received from the organizations' executives. Also, as some organizational executive directors had the designation of a member of the board depending on the organization, I made the decision to extend the invitation to participate in the study to those in this position if they felt it was appropriate given the nature of their organization and if they personally were interested and had the availability to participate.

Once an organization expressed interest in participating as a partner agency, for full disclosure and understanding of the study and to gain full approval from the University's IRB, I sent a copy of the Letter of Cooperation for the organization to review and sign showing that the organization expressed interest and allowed further contact. Once the organization signed and sent the Letter of Cooperation back via e-mail, I forwarded the e-mail to the University's IRB for approval. Once I gained university approval for the Letter of Cooperation, I then begin participant solicitation for that specific organization. Therefore, there was a staggered recruitment process of organizations and participants that occurred from August 21, 2018, until December 18, 2018.

For individual participant participation in the study, solicitation for participants occurred via e-mail as well. The solicitation of individuals to participate in the study followed the same process as the organizational solicitation with an initial invitation to participate sent directly to the individual's e-mail contact with a follow-up solicitation e-mail letter sent out one to two weeks after the first e-mail if there was not an initial response. For those individuals who agreed to participate, there were follow up e-mails sent to set up a date and time for the interview, reminders about the process, an e-mail reminder the day of the scheduled interview as well as an informed consent to document their agreement to participate.

For data collection, I conducted interviews using a telephone conference call service, FreeConferenceCall.com, that provided a digital recording of the conversation. I provided participants with the conference call line dial-in number and access code and asked that they call the conference line number on the date and time of their scheduled interview. Following the interview, participants received their audio recording link and a Word document transcript in an e-mail. Participants had 1 week to review the information once they received the e-mail with their audio recording link and a Word document transcript and make corrections if necessary. If I did not receive a response after 1 week, I used the transcript as written for analysis and to contribute to the overall findings and results.

Demographics

Participants included board members and leaders from 18 501(c)(3) designated nonprofit organizations in Texas that met the study criteria. I sent e-mails specific to nonprofit executives to a variety of organizations all over the state of Texas. In addition to using public information from GuideStar, association websites, and individual organization websites, I also researched each area of the seven Texas regions including the Gulf Coast, Central Texas, the Panhandle, East Texas, and North Texas and used resource guides, Chamber of Commerce and United Way Organizations among other resources to find potential partners for the study in cities spanning the State of Texas.

From contact information obtained related to specific nonprofit organization executives, there was a solicitation of 781 individuals representing 720 organizations that met the organizational criteria. From the 781 e-mails sent to organization chief executives, I received a response, both of interest and decline, from a total of 259 individuals. Organizations that declined the invitation to participate in the study cited the following reasons: expressed a lack interested in participating, determined it was not a topic they wished to engage, expressed that it did fit their organization, noted that they were not using SM to become more informed and did not believe that the organization would be a good candidate, were not willing to provide their board member contact information, were busy with other events and it was not good timing, felt the organization was understaffed, and had already received a number of research requests this year and had already committed to other Ph.D. studies involving their leadership and board. Of the 259 responses from the initial solicitation of organizations, there was interest in participation from 32 nonprofit organizations. Each of the 32 nonprofit organizations that expressed initial interest in participation received a Letter of Cooperation. Of the 32 Letters of Cooperation sent out to interested organizations, 18 organizations signed and returned the Letters of Cooperation agreeing to be partner agencies for the study. These organizations represented Texas nonprofit organizations that were independent 501(c)3 organizations serving their respective communities, were independent 501(c)3 that were affiliates of larger state organizations and national organizations, as well as independent 501(c)3 organizations that provided services nationally and internationally. The selection of interview participants came from contact information provided by the 18 partner agencies.

Table 1

Organization Demographics

O#	Location	Type
O1	Corpus Christi	Independent 501(c)3; Affiliate of Larger National Organization
O2	Houston	Independent 501(c)3
O3	Weimar	Independent 501(c)3; Affiliate of Larger National Organization
O4	Denison	Independent 501(c)3
O5	Pasadena	Independent 501(c)3; Affiliate of Larger National Organization
O6	Euless	Independent 501(c)3; Services Nationally
O7	Houston	Independent 501(c)3
O8	Houston	Independent 501(c)3
O9	New Braunfels	Independent 501(c)3; Services Nationally/International
O10	Houston	Independent 501(c)3
O11	Houston	Independent 501(c)3; Affiliate of Larger National Organization
O12	Houston	Independent 501(c)3
O13	College Station	Independent 501(c)3
O14	Spring	Independent 501(c)3
O15	Austin	Independent 501(c)3; Affiliate of Larger National Organization
O16	Houston	Independent 501(c)3
O17	Tyler	Independent 501(c)3
O18	Houston	Independent 501(c)3; Affiliate of Larger State Organization

Once there was an identification of nonprofit organizations that had an approved Letter of Cooperation on file, there was then recruitment of individuals from those organizations to participate in an interview for the study. For this study, 25 individuals participated in interviews. Participants included organizational board members; organizational executives considered members of their boards, as well as staff members whose role in the organization was specific to SM. Also, there were two organizational board members that provided further information about SM from their professional positions where SM was a strong focus.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

P#	Role
P1	Board Member
P2	Board Member/Executive Director
P3	Board Member/Professional Position Social Media Focus
P4	Board Member
P5	Board Member
P6	Staff Member/Social Media Focus
P7	Board Member
P8	Board Member/Executive Director
P9	Board Member
P10	Board Member
P11	Board Member
P12	Board Member
P13	Board Member
P14	Board Member
P15	Board Member
P16	Board Member/Executive Director
P17	Board Member
P18	Board Member
P19	Board Member/Executive Director
P20	Board Member/Executive Director
P21	Board Member
P22	Board Member
P23	Staff Member/Social Media Focus
P24	Staff Member/Social Media Focus
P25	Board Member/Professional Position Social Media Focus

Data Collection

This study followed Vagle's (2014) postintentional phenomenological research approach and five-component process for conducting research —exploring the phenomenon in varied contexts, using a flexible data collection process, incorporating a postreflection plan, using data systematically in the analysis, and crafting a response and exhibiting the phenomenon in varied contexts. Initially, the sample size determined for the study included interviewing a minimum of 20 individuals. While research perspectives vary on the appropriate sample size for a qualitative interview, experts state an appropriate sample size can be as low as six to 10 interviews with some up to 30 to 50 (Mason, 2010). Green and Thorogood (2009) also supported the justification of saturation after a minimum of 20 interviews as they described that “little that is ‘new’ comes out of transcripts after you have interviewed 20 or 50 people” (p. 120). Therefore, for the study, I quantified the initial sample size of 20 with the final sample size including a total of 25 interviews conducted to contribute to the overall results and findings.

I conducted interviews using a telephone conference call service that provided a digital recording of the conversation. For consistency purposes, I used a script and protocol while conducting interviews to provide a structure for the interview. The seven open-ended interview questions used in the interview followed a semistructured approach. Using a semistructured approach allowed for flexibility within the study for uncertain conditions while at the same time allowed for situations to play out given the specific contexts and information developed based on the interaction with the participants. Each individual interview lasted 40 minutes or less. The conference call services allowed for a digital recording of the interview and then I transcribed the interview verbatim. Following the interview, each participant received an e-mail providing access to their individual audio recording and the researcher generated transcript and had the opportunity to review and make any corrections to the transcript to provide an accurate representation of the material. Participants had 1 week to review and alert the researcher by e-mail to provide any adjustments, additions or corrections.

Exploring the Phenomenon in Varied Contexts

According to Matzler et al. (2014), unconsciously, our minds work towards creating a “coherent picture of a given situation” in order to provide a contextual perspective (p. 33). In order not to generalize organizational variables, there was an attempt to both narrowly and broadly defined the phenomenon of SM use in nonprofit organizations as it applied and adapted to various organizational contexts. Organizations varied in location (e.g., various cities and towns spanning the State of Texas as well as urban and rural environments), varied in mission focus and populations supported (e.g., participant member focus, organizational member focus, traditional social service), varied in boards serving various functions, structures, and sizes, as well as varied as organizations operated as independent 501c(3)'s, and while all were in Texas, some were members of larger affiliates, and operated state-wide, nationally and some serving internationally.

Using a Flexible Data Collection Process

For each area of the data collection process, I established protocols so that for each situation I had a consistent method of capturing and recording data that could later be analyzed and interpreted. In the interview process, to contribute to the conversation, follow up questions added an opportunity to deepen the understanding of the experience of the individual participant. Vagle (2014) stressed that follow up and dialogue within the interview was "all important to the ongoing and deepening understanding of the phenomenon" (p. 83). Therefore, throughout the interviews, follow up and clarification questions were asked immediately to gain a deeper in-depth understanding of the perspective of the individual. While I took notes during the interview process, my main focus as the researcher during the interview was on listening and being present in the conversation.

Incorporating a Postreflection Plan

To capture personal emotions related to participant responses, Vagle (2014) stressed the use of a postreflection journal so as capture research responses in order to not compromise openness to the data collection process. At the conclusion of the interview, I immediatley transcribed the information to mitigate recall bias. In following Vagle's advise, a postreflection plan was also used to capture my thoughts immediately after the conclusion of the interview data collection process.

Data Analysis

For data analysis, there were several examinations of the material to reduce the risk of missing critical information. The core elements of data analysis for this study included coding data, combining information into categories and themes and making a representation of the data by compiling and comparing the information generated from the interview process. Reviewing the transcripts systematically allowed for the identification of emerging themes that were further supported by previous knowledge and research that helped with the construction of the response to the research question. The method of capturing and recording data for analysis included the following steps:

1. Relisten to the entire audio recording and journal thoughts while listening to the conversation.
2. Read through the entire transcript and notated impressions and created an overall essence of the individual interview.
3. Read through the entire transcript line-by-line using brindling to decrease the information by highlighting points of interest and key selections.

4. Reviewed highlighted information and generated short phrases, themes, and categories.
5. Analyzed each interview question individually and then made a comparison of items highlighted by interview question.
6. Made a comparison to the whole by evaluating all transcripts and made a comparison of themes to the other participant transcripts.
7. Made a comparison of responses to current literature for support and justification or opposition.

Using Data Systematically in the Analysis

In coding data, I identified areas of commonality and grouped items, distinguished patterns, and created categories. Data sources used for analysis included conducting interviews, reviewing SM content, and compiling and comparing notes and reflections. To decrease the volume of data gained through the interviewing data collection method, I used phenomenological reduction, otherwise known as the bracketing approach, to search for meaning and essence of the phenomenon (Vagle, 2014). The first step was to review all of the information obtained through the individual member interviews using a bracketing approach to identifying categories, keywords, phrase, sentences or groups of sentences to provide representation and interpretation of the material. The next step was to make a comparison of all materials and attempt to identify an essence that underlies the phenomenon of SM use for nonprofit decision-making.

After each interview, I analyzed the preliminary data and generated themes within each interview transcript. Once I determined keywords, a subset group under the keyword captured specific words and phrases used by the participants. For identifying categories for keywords and phrases, Goldkind's (2015) pre-determined themes assisted in organizing and classifying the initial raw interview data. While a pre-coding structure provided some initial support to the analysis, there was flexibility in assigning additional code if the information did not meet the determinations as set from the pre-coding structure. Then, I used the constant comparison method to further compare transcripts of each individual with the other respondents allowing further evidence to justify categories of themes that emerged from the seven open-ended interview questions (see Appendix D). Along with applying the constant comparison method, previous literature provided support and justification for categories and the determination of saturation of information. From reviewing the previous literature and knowledge on the topic, I then used the information presented within the individual interviews to examine the larger context of the topic within the field.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

To ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the project, I was meticulous with following the protocols for the data collection and analysis processes to provide consistency and accuracy. In the analysis process, I reflected on the information obtained through the interviews as well as the lessons learned through the postreflection journal to develop a response to the research question. In using reflection, this provided the potential to decrease the effects any personal view and potential bias on the research topic (McCauley, 2014). As a part of ensuring data validity, collecting data by using multiple sources (interviews, current peer-reviewed articles, and previous literature) provided further verification and support of the findings and results.

Credibility

For this study, to further support the findings and results, I used multiple sources of data including interviews, researcher notes, and a reflection journal to ensure credibility of the information collected. For the telephone interview, a telephone conference call service, FreeConferenceCall.com, provided a digital recording of the conversation. Following the interview, each participant was sent an e-mail providing access to their individual audio recording and the researcher generated transcript and had the opportunity to review and make any corrections to the transcript to provide an accurate representation of the material. Participants had 1 week to review the information and make changes or corrections to capture an accurate representation of the information they provided. In providing the participants with an opportunity to review the information, this increased the credibility and confidence of accurately reflecting participants' representations. Data collection continued until data saturation occurred. For this study, data saturation resulted when the major themes did not change because of new interviews. In alignment with Green and Thorogood's (2009) notion that new information diminishes after 20 interviews, I decided to conclude the study after 25 interviews as information reported by participants became repetitive to prior interviews. Therefore, I determined reaching data saturation at 25 interviews as the reported information provided by the participants supplied sufficient information to answer the research question.

Transferability

From reviewing the previous literature and knowledge on the topic, I then used the information presented within the individual interviews to examine the larger context of the topic within the field. Reviewing the transcripts systematically allowed for the identification of emerging themes that further supported previous knowledge and research and helped with the construction of the response to the research question. During the evaluation and analysis, I compared SM use within the context of the individual organization within its specific set of boundaries but also applied SM use to the larger phenomenon.

As SM platforms have different uses, there is a limit on the feasible to generalize application to all platforms (Etter et al., 2015). Therefore, in limiting the platforms to Facebook and Twitter, there was a narrower focus. Even though limiting the study to Facebook and Twitter excluded application to those countries where Facebook and Twitter did not exist, other comparable SM platforms exist in regions (i.e., Twister, Soup, HelloWorld, Gnu social, rstat.us, Lorea, and Diaspora, etc.) where study findings could be applicable (Gehl & Synder-Yuly, 2016).

Dependability

From the very onset of the research process, there was careful management and organization of information. To document the process, I used an audit trail of the research process and provided justifications as to the methods used. In keeping a well-documented audit trail of the research process, this allowed for a justification as to the methods used and added credibility as there were further support and justification for the interpretation leading to the results.

Confirmability

In setting a clear framework of the research construction, this allowed for increased consistency and mitigated the risk of misinterpretation of the information and decreased the need for individual interpretation and varying points of view. Potential threats to the validity of the study included the environment and setting, participants, and structure and methods of collection. To confirm findings, the use of triangulation of data, performing peer reviews, negative case analysis, and identifying researcher bias provided further support of the confirmability and contributions of the study.

Study Results

The research question for this study was: What is the experience of nonprofit board members in relation to the use of social media for organizational decision-making and stakeholder engagement? Of the 259 responses received from the study solicitation, 93% declined the opportunity to participate in the study with a majority citing that the study would not fit them well or their organization would not be a good candidate as the organization and its board was not currently using SM to become more informed. From the experience and perspective of those interviewed, 72% of the respondents stated that their organization did NOT use data generated from stakeholders through Facebook and Twitter for decision-making purposes.

Emergent Theme 1

The first emerging theme was nonprofit boards rarely use social media for decision-making purposes. Although organizational leaders acknowledge a need for SM programs and have an interest in its capabilities and usage, there remains a disconnect between the use of SM as a tool for decision-making with boards not fully realizing or adopting SM into decision-making practices. This theme emerged from the pattern of 18 participants' responses (see Table 3).

Table 3

Evidence of Lack of Social Media Data Use in Board Organizational Decision-Making

P#	Participant response
P1	
P2	At this point [there is] very little use [of social media]
P3	
P4	
P5	[The director] didn't see the benefit of it
P6	
P7	To be quite honest with you I haven't really thought about Facebook or Twitter
P8	Those decisions are pretty much decisions that are made on a daily basis in the office, not at a board level
P9	I'm not really aware
P10	We really don't use data gathered through social media for decision making we really use it more to promote engagement and involvement of [members] in events and activities, but we don't ask for specific input or gather specific input through social media for decision making
P11	In terms of the reception of information from Facebook I would say we don't it's more of a giving information not so much of a getting information…so I don't know if it's so much of a two-way process as much more of a one-way process
P12	We do not use social media very well
P13	
P14	I wouldn't say that we really use it much for decision-making
P15	You know, we really don't use that to make our decisions, it's mainly a tool to get information out
P16	We do not
P17	
P18	
P19	We seriously under-utilize social media
P20	It's not [used] at this point
P21	I have no idea
P22	Personally, I have not seen any data that they have pulled from social media to use as a part of our input stakeholder meeting
P23	I don't know that we do
P24	I really don't think that we do I think it's anecdotal information but it's not concise enough to drive programmatic decision making or fundraising decision making
P25	I'm not sure there's a clear distinction whether her outreach was by traditional media social media or others

In response to the use of data generated by outside stakeholders from platforms such as Facebook and Twitter and its use for board organizational decision-making, Participant 24 noted

> Personally I've not seen any data that they pulled from social media to use as part of our input stakeholder meeting…most of the information the staff has provided has been very traditional paper-based, electronic forms electronic, spreadsheets or whatever that may be printed hardcopy or get some PDF, but I haven't seen anything honestly that suggests whether it's either directly from a social media site or some analytics that are associated with it.

Similarly, Participant 10 expressed:

> We really don't use data gathered through social media for decision-making. We really use it more to promote engagement and involvement of our [members] in events and activities, but we don't ask for specific input or gather specific input through social media for decision-making… however, it's an interesting consideration for us and actually being invited to participate in this probably spurs us to want think a little bit more deeply about how we might use social media a bit more effectively. It's a bit of a two-edged sword for us because of the nature of the organization in that it emphasizes personal relationships and social media is, in many ways, a fairly impersonal communication.

Participant 17, who mentioned serving on numerous nonprofit boards, also described a comparable experience when reflecting on the use of data generated by outside stakeholders from platforms such as Facebook and Twitter and its use for board organizational decision-making and mentioned:

> When I think about boards on which I sit, you know, I don't know that we've ever [used social media for decision-making]. The only board that I can think of …we had someone come in she was a board member and to get everybody up to speed on Twitter and tell us what would be helpful in promoting and how to do that and when to do that and things like that. And she even further and you know talk about who to tweet and trying to do it as an organized approach. Other than that, and I've been on several boards, that is, now I think about it, that's only board I've ever served on where we were encouraged to use social media to promote the board work. So, I guess what I want to say is that it's not been my experience, thus far, that boards nonprofit boards pay a lot of attention to [social media] and they vary from what [they're] doing and all of that, but that's interesting for me to think about that.

Adding further insight, Participant 16 commented

> You know we really don't use that to make our decisions it's mainly a tool to get information out. I don't know that we actually use the information using any information gathered from Facebook Twitter or Instagram to make our decisions now it influences the way we want to advertise, but that's probably all.

Only 28% of those interviewed reported their organization using SM used as a tool to generate information for organizational decision-making and stakeholder engagement. Of those organization that did use SM as a tool for organizational decision-making, the primary purpose related to organizational planning followed by using SM statistics to contribute to organizational knowledge and as a tool for monitoring brand management and complaint resolution. When describing SM use, Participant 1 highlighted:

> For us, we use the data to see kind of see what people are interested in and make sure that we are making good use of our resources relative to our mission and that maybe some of this social media data can help us figure out what events to do and what kind of attendance we might expect…We track website visits, newsletter subscribers and then some social media metrics like Facebook and Twitter followers.

Adding to the description of SM use from an organization that reported as using SM as a tool for organizational decision-making Participant 8 mentioned:

> Because we have board members in various locations around the country and various age spread we have several that are more into social media and that, and we have some that don't do it at all, but when we have our discussions, of course, everybody is bringing their findings their facts their opinions their thoughts based on where they've obtained their information and some of them get some of their information or thoughts from social media some is just from practical real-life experience some of it's from just one on one visiting with many of our people around the world.

Emergent Theme 2

The second theme that emerged was nonprofit organizations use social media for awareness and as a one-directional use of broadcasting information for stakeholder engagement rather than a source of data collection to inform board decisions. For those organizations that participated in the study, while 100% of the participants interviewed expressed that their organizations used some form of SM, with Facebook as the most popular platform, SM use in the nonprofit organization was primarily used for organizational awareness, generating revenue, making connections and broadcasting the organizations' message rather than for organizational decision-making.

Table 4

Organization Engagement in Social Media Platforms

O#	Facebook	Twitter	Other
O1	X	x	YouTube, Blog
O2	X	x	Instagram
O3	X		Remind
O4	X	x	
O5	X		
O6	X	x	Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest
O7	X		
O8	X		
O9	X	x	Blog
O10	X	x	Instagram, Blog
O11	X		LinkedIn
O12	X		Instagram, YouTube
O13	X	x	Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube
O14	X		YouTube, Nextdoor
O15	X	x	
O16	X		Instagram, YouTube
O17	X		YouTube, Blog
O18	X		

Organizational awareness. Participant 13 highlighted the awareness SM brings to the organization stating:

> [Social media] highlights us and puts us in a good light when it comes to the other charitable entity around that don't use Facebook or Twitter or social media at all

it's a big separator. They're constantly on it the constantly requesting people to like the page, making sure that is not stale, and the post is fresh.

Additionally, Participant 6 said:

I've been doing this a long time so in the past we you know at marketing we would do a lot of direct mail which is expensive and slow and very time consuming even newsletter e-mail newsletter and when I came I've been with [the organization] 5 years and 5 years ago we did a lot of e-mail newsletters and people don't read e-mail anymore so social media is another way that we can have a direct line of communication to our stakeholders.

Generating revenue**.** When discussing the revenue opportunities available with SM, Participant 20 mentioned:

It's definitely generating revenue big time for donations.

Similarly, Participant 21 discussed that the opportunities for generating revenue through SM are influencing operational, organizational decisions as far as how advertising dollars will be spent in the future noting:

We're actually starting to get money through social media donations from individuals. And so I think a big factor in that Facebook has been developing its giving platform and I think now there are no fees associated with donations made through Facebook which makes it a lot more attractive than a lot of other Giving platforms. And Giving Tuesday last year the Gates Foundation matched the first $10M worth of donation may be a Facebook and so that we saw an exponential increase in donations made through Facebook. And so board members actually set up fundraising pages for [the organization] with Giving Tuesday to try and take advantage of that match. And so that's a really big shift…We're probably going to be increasing our advertising spending because of the returns that we've gotten in the past.

Making connections. For one organization, the use of SM allowed for making connections during recent emergency situations, such as Hurricane Harvey, the Carolina Hurricane, Hurricane Michael in Florida, and the Orlando Night Club shooting. Participant 6 discussed the idea that:

> [social media] it's been very helpful for real-time communications because we're so spread out …that was a big way to be able to communicate to the rest of the nation how they could help us, how they could pray for our teams, how they could donate…we use social media as a way to share condolence, provide information, share stories of what our teams are doing.

Broadcasting the organizations' message. When describing the use of SM to broadcast the organizations' message, Participant 17 noted:

> Social media was the quickest way to get the word out...it was really good at raising awareness…the more people are aware of your programs and services the more money you're going to raise it's just a vicious cycle and goes hand in hand, and if people are more inclined to pay attention to the social media and give and volunteer your social media profile, it's a positive one.

Of those organizations surveyed, only 32% used Twitter. One participant, Participant 1, presumed the reason as to why there was a lower level for Twitter use and other platforms stating:

> Generally, most of us don’t use these services a ton I guess the one everyone seems to use is Facebook but after that, there is very little awareness of other social media platforms…I don’t think we’re as heavy Twitter user just because I guess our board is not super familiar with everything and because there’s other social media apps as well so we’re trying to figure out which ones to be on and what they’re good at knowing that they’re all a bit different.

Another participant, Participant 22, provided support as to why their specific organization was only using Facebook and not using other available platforms noting:

> Twitter and Instagram and all the other platforms are still nonexistent at this point because we've been primarily a volunteer run organization, so we relied really heavily on people's expertise and the skill set that they brought to the table and because it was an older demographic that ran the organization priority was never placed on those sorts of mechanisms…so social media was not a skill set it wasn't an arrow in the quiver as it were.

From the perspective of a staff member dedicated to providing SM for the organization when asked about strategy Participant 6 stated:

> I get asked a lot about you know should we be doing this type of social media should we have a bigger presence on this channel and my response is we don't start with the medium and we start with the goals so kind of what's our what are

> our outcome that we're looking for and then we figure out which social media channels for tactics will help us get that goal. So, I before I started an Instagram page, I thought long and hard about how I wanted to use Instagram in a way that helped me with a goal because otherwise it's a lot of busy work and there's no reason to do it if it's just well I just want to be on there I think it is a waste of people's time and your viewers time. So, I think you have to start with your strategy first.

Emergent Theme 3

The third theme to emerge was that organizations are not in opposition to using social media as a decision-making tool. Views of the historical nature of how SM practices developed in the organization to the state of the current time also provided an insight on the impact of SM use in relation to the organization's contextual historical roots. Participant 17 noted:

> It's not a matter of where we’re in opposition to it it's just that I inherited an organization that it just had not it really hadn’t done much, and I didn't have a plan. It’s almost as I’m starting I'm not starting from scratch because we do have a Facebook page, but we're not really using it or looking to it as a tool… things are only essential once you get the basics down when you get that then I can start addressing the use of social media in our work.

Expressing a similar situation, Participant 22 noted:

> Approximately 3 years ago we had no social media presence whatsoever no Facebook no Twitter…our social media presence was nonexistent…and the

> organization has been in somewhat of crisis management mode for a while as well so social media up to this point has not really played a role in any way as far as the decision-making process is for the board.

Only one participant, Participant 8, noted where the use of SM was not well received by individual board members:

> I think we have some people that are more old school and if they got something that was presented to them that this is this is happening because of something they found out on social media they're going to automatically have a barrier they have to overcome. I don't know how else to describe that. But I know we have had discussions at board levels where we're talking about different things and talking about the importance of pushing our online presence our social media presence and I've got one older board member he just throws up his hands and says well it is a complete waste of money and it's definitely is generational.

Participant 8 continued to comment on not being opposed to the use of SM for board decision-making and further stated:

> I think social media and social media platforms have a place in a voice so to speak of that too. There's people out there that are expressing themselves and you know it takes some time to shuffle through some of the what's emotion and what's true or what's a valid idea what's not, but I do think there's a voice out there that does need to be heard on a board level. As far as an influence for making decisions with the current makeup of our board I'd say that social media does not have a large impact in that area people are aware of what is being presented or what's

> thought about or what talked about but as far as steering policy or anything it's not doing that at this time.

Even those organization that reported using SM for decision-making, there were challenges and hesitancy related to the information generated. Participant 6 emphasized:

> We don't usually ask questions on you know we're making this decision, what do you think? Again, we do that a lot on our internal pages with our internal constituents, but from an external standpoint, that's really scary to open the floodgates. So, I think there's also just a hard; you're kind of saying well the overall tone is, as opposed to you know, 60 percent of our followers think we should do this.

In relation to the effects of SM on decision-making, Participant 25 described how SM has increased the "need for speedy decision-making." Participant 25 further elaborated saying:

> I would say in a traditional media environment the turnaround time from hearing a story from seeing responses or whatever could be measured in days what clearly has happened with Twitter and Facebook it now measures in hours. And that's probably been one of the most dramatic changes.

Emergent Theme 4

The fourth theme to emerge was that social media use is more prevalent at the operations level. To provide a representation and voice of stakeholders for organizational decision-making, 65% of those interviewed identified that the board member makeup or board matrix was the primary way to represent stakeholders followed by allowing stakeholders to attend organizational meetings such as the board's annual meeting or relying on the organization's executive director to remain connected and in communication with stakeholders. For organizations that are using SM in decision-making; some are only used by staff at the operation day-to-day operational decisions and rarely brought up to the board level. Participant 25 stressed:

> It's important to recognize the board I think has a very good understanding of the policy role the board has versus the operating role that the organization has.

At the board level, using SM for board decision-making, Participant 1 stressed:

> [social media] is still kind of new to us, so we treat it with a little bit of hesitancy or a little bit reserved knowing the limitation on some of the data we collect.

Participant 6, who serves in a SM role within the organization, commented**:**

> I think that you would find that most of your, the leaders at the highest level, are probably on social media the least. Just I think organizationally and generationally, I've seen that at other boards I've served on as well as, so our CEO is a wonderful listener, and has I think a great handle on our staff and the different constituents, and at the same time [the CEO] is not very active on social media. So, I try to make sure and send [the CEO] things or tag [the CEO] the things that I want him to see…usually, your leaders are a little bit older, and so they're typically are less involved on social media, and so I think the same with your boards and they probably are not the ones who are most active listening to the other issues.

Also supporting the use of SM at the day-to-day operational level as opposed to the board level, Participant 8 mentioned:

> Most of those decisions come from the data that our media coordinator gives to me relayed basically to day in and day out operations and not so much with board decisions. We, I do report back to the board what what's going on and what are some of the more popular topics or some of, the more popular posted things that we've had but overall most of that information is given to me, and then I'll talk with our director media, and we'll decide OK, do we want to go down an avenue here and you know try to develop an idea or develop a topic a little bit more fully to try to explain what we're doing and how we're doing that but those are pretty much decisions that are made on a daily basis in office, not at a board level… as far as what we do in-house or on more on a daily basis somebody comments on something you know we have maybe 15 or 20 comments about one particular post that we have and it definitely warrants looking at trying to figure out OK is this a topic we need to develop or is this something we need to bring clarification to or is this something that you know these people are really interested in, and maybe we need to just be in touch with them on more on a one on one basis to see what their interest is.

Emergent Theme 5

The fifth theme to emerge was that organizations may not be generating enough data from outside stakeholders on SM platforms to be useful for organizational decision-making. Multiple participants expressed their belief that there was not enough data being generated on SM to be useful for board organizational decision-making. Participant 7 expressed:

> I don't think there would be any organizational barriers to incorporating the information generated from social media; it's just that we don't generate an awful lot of information from social media…everything that we do is pretty much face-to-face.

In similar sentiments, Participant 11 commented:

> I don't know using data through Facebook and Twitter I don't know for obtaining data from those as much as communicating what we're doing So I don't know if it's so much of a two-way process as much more of a one-way process of us saying hey here's what we're doing here's what's happening so for. I don't think I don't know we're generating that much data through those in our in our particular nonprofit because what we're doing our data and our information on need is coming directly from [stakeholders] and a lot of that is physical conversations, e-mails, not a social media hey this needs to be done and that came to us through. Facebook or through Twitter. It's more of an output as opposed to an input.

While nonporift organizations may not be generating enough data from outside stakeholders on SM platforms to be useful for organizational decision-making, evidence suggested that boards collect data on an in-person and direct conversation basis from both the organization executives, staff members, and board members. Of those interviewed, only 32% of the organizations provided experiences of data collection that exhibited a possible "hub and spoke" leadership tendency within the organization where information has the potential to be filtered or biased towards the operational leaders' desires for the organization.

Table 5

Evidence of "Hub and Spoke" Leadership Tendency Within Nonprofit Boards

P#	Statement of "hub and spoke" leadership tendency
P1	We work with the executive director on consulting on lots of these decision with the board deciding on what we end up doing.
P2	
P3	We get a report from each of the committee members at each meeting or not members the committee chairs at each meeting a report from the executive leadership team at [the organization] including the CEO and the individual CFO and a few other various department heads at which time they all excuse themselves and we as board members make decisions based on that information provided to us.
P4	
P5	
P6	
P7	It's not unusual to have our executive director come to us with an idea it's not unusual for her to come to us with something that she feels it would be good for the organization we as a board basically discuss that issue whatever it is and then collectively we will decide on the path forward for that whatever the issue
P8	
P9	[The president] always wants everybody's opinion to make sure that we're making the right decisions for the organization, so it's typically we vote for major decisions we vote as a board and then for day to day I'll just say for a lack of a better way to explain it with some of the less important decisions [the president] sends out an e-mail and get our perspective and then he makes the final decision on how things are handled.
P10	
P11	
P12	
P13	
P14	
P15	
P16	A lot of I guess the decision-making process is the executive director talking to [board members] individually and then bringing it to a meeting and there'll be a discussion.
P17	
P18	Our data comes from our [organizational] directors directly. That is filtered through the administration, and then the administration meets regularly with the board and gives us that information and decisions are made accordingly.
P19	
P20	
P21	We delegate a lot of the collection of data to our executive director who provides that information largely during board meetings.
P22	Typically the C.E.O. of x has prepared packages for us to use as decision-making tools as well as additional information in some cases those are mailed out e-mailed out ahead of time so that we have an opportunity prior to meeting.
P23	
P24	
P25	

While there may not be enough information generated from SM to use for organizational decision-making, one participant provided insight on the decision-making process providing the feedback that:

> I don't know that we get information back from our social media followers to make the decisions, but we make decisions wondering how they will react or how it will impact them (P6).

Emergent Theme 6

The sixth theme to emerge was that organizational barriers to incorporating the information generated from social media into organizational decisions included not having the time, not having a dedicated individual to manage the organization's social media presences, cost and budgetary restrictions, and not having technical skills to use social media to its fullest potential. When discussing time and not having a dedicated individual to manage SM, Participant 2 noted:

> At this point [there is] very little use [of social media] because we have not effectively used it the way we know we should. We're aware of it, but it takes money to hire a social media person, so we're not effective…Our barrier is finding a really good social media marketing person that would be willing to help us until we get sufficient funding.

Similarly, Participant 4 stressed:

> It takes a lot of work and a lot of time and work to push the things that you really want people to know about.

Changes in platforms was also a concern for multiple participants and mentioned as a challenge to incorporating SM use into organizational decision-making. As described by Participant 20:

> I don't get that Facebook keeps changing their you know their admin stuff, and every time I learned they change it again…I sat down today I was trying to figure out that platform, and it's totally changed since the last time I looked at it, and now I got to really learn it…they tend to change stuff so often when you're busy like me you just don't have time to relearn the stuff and then I'll get frustrated after I sit in front of it for an hour…every time I learn it and they change it and then I you know you feel like you're back to square one.

Participant 1 also highlighted:

> I see in the news that Facebook changes its algorithms and to invest so much time and effort into something and then to find out that oh they switched some things so what you did before none of that works anymore it would be disheartening so I read something that some of the small nonprofits when [Facebook] did the algorithm change that they were showing a lot lower in peoples' feeds and lower in search results.

Along with time and changes in platforms, participants reported cost and budgetary restrictions as a barrier to incorporating the use of SM for organizational decision-making. Participant 5 said:

> We have zero dollars for advertising, we have zero dollars to put our name out there it's basically word or mouth, it's up to the board members right now and the

> one volunteer that we have to spread the word, you know, to get our name out there and to get us established out there in the communities.

Similarly, Participant 10 described:

> Of course, it's, as with most things in most non-profits, it's a question of where we see the greatest return on investment for the resources…determining the kinds of information and data and input that would really be beneficial to the nature of our organization that we are not able to already really gather in a much more detailed in-person format.

Limits in cost and budgetary restrictions can also cause further organizational challenges related to SM. As Participant 3 noted:

> The biggest challenge and struggle that I have seen in the last 10 years as it has evolved is a lot of companies both corporate for-profit and nonprofit sector leadership has not really acknowledged a formal level just how important these roles are, your social media manager, and they give [these positions] to junior people right out of college that frankly just don't have the experience and haven't stepped into yet in their career on lower-profile ways to use as good and mature judgement as more senior people and they don't pay them a lot and so then what do you get you get? You get mistakes that get made at a very high-profile level and get people in trouble and even fired. And you're like wait should that person really get fired? Is that fair to hold a 22 year old right out of college accountable for making a mistake that takes 10 years to know or should we have a 32 year old in this role and paying them two to three times as much because it is very forward

> facing and then we need to give them the rope and the leash to make decisions as an artist because that’s really what it is its writing its managing an art form an emerging art work not emerging an art form that has emerged in the last 10 years, and you have to give them the kind of leeway to take some risks. If we’re not taking risks then were irrelevant being completely risk-averse is not conducive to successful social media and occasionally you are going to make a mistake correct it on the fly and move on don’t expect perfection, it doesn’t exist.

Lastly, not having the technical skills to use SM to its fullest potential was a challenge for organizations. As described by Participant 20:

> We're trying to evolve and get to a point where we're utilizing [social media]…I’d say we're using Facebook to about maybe 10 percent of its capacity. You know up to this point if you were trying to talk metrics to the team their eyes would have completely totally glazed over…social media up to this point has not really played a role in any way as far as the decision-making process is for the board… those opportunities have not presented themselves.

Further evidence of not having the technical skills provided by Participant 24 included mentioning:

> In the 2 or 3 meetings that I have attended, there's been no discussion whatsoever of social media… [we] use social media as part of the larger advertising campaign to get the word out…but I don't think there's any analysis of how effective it was... I haven't really seen any strategic or tactical use to employ a social media site to which you know they help you achieve a specific and I haven't seen that it's

> out there I haven't seen it, and frankly I don't know of anybody within the organization, with the possible exception of the new development officer…really take that on and really been able to do anything with that.

Participant 16 expressed:

> I think the members of this board are of the generation that don't some of the members don't even use Facebook. It's probably a big leap I think maybe in the next 5 or 10 years it'll be the only way we get information out…but right now it's mainly information disseminated tool.

Finding also showed that organizations are cautious about the future focus of SM and how SM platforms will continue to change. Participant 1 noted:

> We don’t really understand, and we don’t know how things might change in the future.

Similarly, Participant 11 expressed:

> It's going to be very interesting to see what happens over the next 5 to 10 years as to how many of those people decide to get on to Facebook or if they decided to jettison it altogether and stick with another platform, so I think the main thing is trying to keep up with what is the what is the current platform…communicating that information and what we're doing in the future what's going to be the best vehicle to do that because you know you may find ourselves 10 years from now going OK there's a completely different platform we use and Facebook's basically pretty much gone away so I think the mass standpoint you just got to keep up with

> what's the what's the current trend and where people are going so that you can continue to be relevant.

Summary

Of those interviewed, 72% stated that their organization did *not* use data generated from stakeholders through Facebook and Twitter for decision-making purposes. Of those organization that used SM as a tool for organizational decision-making, the primary purpose related to organizational planning followed by using SM statistics to contribute to organizational knowledge and as a tool for monitoring brand management and complaint resolution. From the data analysis of the 25 participant interviews, six themes emerged from the experience of nonprofit board members in relation to the use of SM for organizational decision-making and stakeholder engagement:

Emergent Theme 1: Nonprofit boards rarely use SM information for decision-making purposes.

Emergent Theme 2: Nonprofit organizations use SM for awareness and as a one-directional use of broadcasting information for stakeholder engagement rather than a source of data collection to inform board decisions.

Emergent Theme 3: Organizations are not in opposition to using SM as a decision-making tool.

Emergent Theme 4: SM use is more prevalent at the operations level.

Emergent Theme 5: Organizations may not be generating enough data from outside stakeholders on SM platforms to be useful for organizational decision-making.

Emergent Theme 6: Organizational barriers to incorporating the information generated from SM into organizational decisions included not having the time, not having a dedicated individual to manage the organization’s social media presences, cost and budgetary restrictions, and not having technical skills to use social media to its fullest potential. While nonprofit organizations acknowledge a need for SM and have an interest in its capabilities and usage, there remains a disconnect between application and SM use as a tool for decision-making with boards not fully realizing or adopting SM into board decision-making organizational practices. In the next chapter, I provide a discussion and interpretation of the results of the study findings, present recommendations for further research, and provide concluding remarks.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of SM and its potential use for decision-making in nonprofit organizations. Using an interpretive hermeneutical phenomenological approach, I obtained information on how nonprofit organizations use the information generated by SM in decision-making. The information came from interviewing 25 board members and leaders from Texas nonprofits whose organizations engage with stakeholders through SM platforms. The aim was to identify ways SM can contribute to organizational decision-making by capturing the unique experiences of nonprofit board members and leaders related to their organizations' use of SM.

I obtained data about the phenomenon of SM by interviewing 25 nonprofit board members and leaders. I asked open-ended questions of the participants that focused on current and future organizational use of SM in decision-making, the challenges and opportunities for SM use, and ways of measuring the effects of SM use on decision-making. For data analysis, I used the bracketing approach as advised by Vagle (2014) to search for the meaning and essence of the phenomenon. Then, I compared all materials to attempt to identify an essence that underlies the phenomenon of SM use for nonprofit decision-making.

More than two thirds (72%) of the 25 respondents stated that their organizations do *not* use data generated from stakeholders through Facebook and Twitter for decision-making purposes. Sixty-five percent identified that the board member makeup or board matrix was the primary way to represent stakeholders, followed by allowing stakeholders to attend organizational meetings such as the board's annual meeting (17%) or relying on the organization's executive director to remain connected and in communication with stakeholders (17%). Only 28% of those interviewed reported SM use as a tool to generate information for organizational decision-making and stakeholder engagement.

Interpretation of Findings

Although leaders of United States nonprofit organizations acknowledge a need for SM and have an interest in its capabilities and usage, there remains a disconnect between application and SM use as a tool for decision-making with boards not fully realizing or adopting SM into board decision-making organizational practices. To gain further understanding of this problem, I assessed the experiences of nonprofit board members and leaders relative to the use of SM for nonprofit board decision-making. Six themes emerged regarding the phenomenon:

- Emergent Theme 1: Nonprofit boards rarely use SM information for decision-making purposes.
- Emergent Theme 2: Nonprofit organizations use SM for awareness and as a one-directional use of broadcasting information for stakeholder engagement rather than a source of data collection to inform board decisions.
- Emergent Theme 3: Organizations are not in opposition to using SM as a decision-making tool.

  Emergent Theme 4: SM use is more prevalent at the operations level.

- Emergent Theme 5: Organizations may not be generating enough data from outside stakeholders on SM platforms to be useful for organizational decision-making.
- Emergent Theme 6: Organizational barriers to incorporating the information generated from SM into organizational decisions included not having the time, not having a dedicated individual to manage the organization's social media presences, cost and budgetary restrictions, and not having technical skills to use social media to its fullest potential.

Emergent Theme 1

All of the organizations represented in the study reported the use of Facebook, and 32% reported the use of Twitter. These findings support Goldkind's (2015) reporting that websites, Facebook, and Twitter remain the most popular engagement tools among nonprofits. As Participant 11 noted, "Facebook [is] probably the biggest social media factor that we use besides our own website our own web page which is of course linked to everything." Other platforms for engagement included Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Blogs, and Nextdoor; however, these platforms had a much lower usage rate. In providing feedback on the lower level for Twitter use and other platforms, Participant 1 stated, "Generally, most of us don't use these services a ton I guess the one everyone seems to use is Facebook but after that, there is very little awareness of other social media platforms."

Emergent Theme 2

Findings from the study support Waters and Feneley's (2013) previous research that even with Web 2.0 technologies offering increased stakeholder engagement and two-way communication, static one-directional websites and using SM as a one-direction communication channel remain the preferred method of communication for nonprofits. Organizations in this study used SM platforms primarily for awareness and a one-directional use of broadcasting information. Participant 3 discussed the limitations of only using SM in this capacity stating:

> You can't just use it to broadcast. If you are just broadcasting your message people see that it's just a glorified website and then you can't mirror what you are doing on your website, you need to talk with people respond to people that are pissed off you need to address complaints, controversial issues, you can't just go dark on them stuff that is awkward or icky you know you have to be careful but you also need to be brave otherwise you are not authentic and people don't give a shit, they don't want to interact anymore.

Findings from the study also suggested that the use of SM as a tool becomes a consideration once the organization's essential operations are stable allowing for the focusing of efforts on other structural and operational areas, including SM. Hindrances to an organization's ability to use SM effectively can include but are not limited to the organization is currently experiencing or recovering from a state of crisis or there is an instability in operations (such as continuous staff turn-over or internal restructuring).

Emergent Theme 3

Unlike Goldkind's (2015) finding that an obstacle to the incorporation of SM use within nonprofit organizations is the willingness of board members to allow for its usage, results from this study suggest that nonprofit organizations and boards are not in opposition to using SM as a decision-making tool. Rather, organizational barriers to incorporating the information generated from SM into organizational decisions included not having the time, not having a dedicated individual to manage the organization's SM presence, cost and budgetary restrictions, and not having technical skills to use SM to its fullest potential. Study findings supported Wiencierz et al.'s (2015) claim that organizations may be hesitant to allow access to user comments for fear that it might affect the organization's reputation and perceived trustworthiness. Participant 6 noted:

> There's a lot of things like that we consider as we move forward, how can we honor those involved and also not create a P.R. backlash…I think we're seeing a lot of that in politics right now with the #MeToo movement and even I think with the Kavanaugh hearings, just a huge wave of information on social media…I think it also depends on where people where the hot buttons lie so for instance it has not affected us to this point, but you're only one scandal or one news story away from pain to be the target of that and so I think that that can help to change society in the way that we do things, and so that's really exciting, it's also from a public relations standpoint a little scary because you hope that it's a positive influence and not a negative influence or you don't want to be on the receiving end of the negative.

Emergent Theme 4

In the study, 28% of the participants indicated that their nonprofit boards do make use of information generated from SM, all-be-it rarely, for nonprofit board organizational decision-making. However, SM use is more prevalent at the operations level. While boards rarely use and discuss SM at the board level there is evidence that operations within the organization may use SM data; however, even at the organizational level, the role of managing SM is not perceived as a vital organizational function and is either managed by inconsistent volunteers and interns, or added as an extra duty to an individual in another staff position (e.g., executive director, marketing and public relations officers, etc.) and not often viewed as a dedicated individual role.

Also, a few participants indicated the use of SM platforms for internal communications, which supports Gleba’s (2014) prediction that business will use SM as an internal tool to connect workers, ideas, and information to share ideas, solve problems and increase decision-making abilities. However, since this study focused primarily on connecting with external stakeholders, I did not explore or further developed this concept. Although not fully developed, the indication of SM as an internal communication tool does provide evidence of SM use at the organizational level.

Emergent Theme 5

While nonprofit boards may not be generating data from external stakeholders on SM platforms, evidence suggested that boards collect data on an in-person and direct conversation basis. The results from this study negate the claims from Freiwirth (2017) and Sundstrom and Levenshus (2017), who concluded that board members continue to remain isolated in the boardroom and dialogue with stakeholders remains unaddressed. Participant 7 provided evidence that board members have direct conversations with external stakeholders and stated, “Everything that we do is pretty much face-to-face.” Participant 8 provided further support and noted, “[Stakeholders] have open access to board members…they've got their e-mail addresses they're able to contact them with any questions concerns or anything, so they have open communication with the board.” Also supporting the representation of stakeholders by means of communication, Participant 1 mentioned:

> Each board member is kind of responsible for staying in contact with different [stakeholders] so hopefully that touchpoints gets some of their concerns addressed…we try to collect information talking to people…so we take some feedback but also knowing that we’re not addressing our full potential market…and hopefully everybody is being represented, or to the degree that we can, we are representing people.

Participant 15 added, “We get feedback constantly so we, you know, we take those into consideration.” With similar statements made by Participant 19, “We get a lot of suggestions, and we do make changes accordingly based on that information as far as the way we advertised as and the format that we put things out in…so, we do take those suggestions to heart.”

While not opposed to the consideration of SM use, Participant 10 also added that the organization empathized personal relationships whereas SM was more impersonal:

> It's an interesting consideration for us and actually being invited to participate in this probably spurs us to think a little bit more deeply about How we might use social media a bit more effectively. It's a bit of a two-edged sword for us because of the nature of the organization that in emphasizes personal relationship and social media is in many ways a fairly impersonal communication.

Additionally, Conger and Lawler’s (2009) description of a “hub and spoke” leadership tendency where one individual, usually the CEO, directs the meetings and takes on the main leadership role with the information accepted by other members without fully individually researching (Bruni-Bossio et al., 2016; Zhu et al., 2016) is not fully supported by the study. While many organizations to rely on the executive director and organizational staff to provide information for board decision-making, there are other sources of information used as well to determine appropriate board action.

Emergent Theme 6

Unlike findings from Huang et al. (2016), which indicated that nonprofit organizations do not understand of the benefits of SM and refuse to adopt SM practices, this study supported the notion that nonprofits do understand the benefits of SM and are optimistic and willing to adopt practices. Participant 3 stressed:

> We absolutely leverage social media that is the way the world talks now you know different mediums for different ages...We retweet, we post, we love it when somebody nobody tells your story better and is more credible that people other than you and this goes for any business…Any time we can tap into genuine authentic stories that are being driven from the masses and people outside our

> organization we absolutely leverage that because its more credible to the general public.

Similarity, Participant 14 noted:

> I think [social media] is vital because a lot of people plan their lives around what they see on social media and if you don't have a social media presence nowadays it's almost like it's not happening…just for the sake of making yourself legit and accountable to those who are giving something like social media and then letting them know we're still relevant… showing that [we're] transparent and showing that [we're] actually out there in the community helping out [our] subjects that [we're] charged to help out…puts reality in the fact that [we're] doing something in the, you know, in the minds of those that think everything is virtual.

Further supporting that nonprofits do understand the benefits of social media, Participant 5 mentioned:

> Before it was enough to have a website, now not so much. You need to have a Twitter account, you need to have Facebook, you need to have Instagram, you need to have all these things going on because that's what a lot of funders are asking for because, I don't know why, but maybe it's because that just gives them more proof or more evidence that that hey, you're actually doing something, hey, you're actually helping people or there's some accountability involved in what you're doing.

As evident from participant interviews, nonprofit board members do consider the effects that SM platforms such as Twitter and Facebook can have on viral marketing (Dehghani,

& Tumer, 2015). Participant 1 mentioned, “I guess our dream would be to have some sort of viral campaign or content.” However, even with the success of a viral post, Participant 3, who has experienced three viral campaigns in his professional career with one video accumulating over 103 million views stressed:

> That doesn’t necessarily translate into somebody that comes to our page and likes it and then starts following it, they shared that individual story but not necessarily converted them into an advocate or somebody that follows our page.

In reviewing the results, organizations did recognize the potential risks associated with SM such as the continued relevancy of information, varied weighted perspectives, and lack of control (Lu, 2015); however, there was no indication in the participant responses that these risks would present a barrier to board considering the information generated from SM platforms. Participant 6 mentioned:

> We don’t usually ask questions on, you know, we’re making this decision, what do you think?...From an external standpoint, that’s really scary to open the floodgates.

Participant 25 described the SM as a valid source for supplementary information stating:

> I would say that this is supplementary information yes I think there's an awareness that the credibility of some of the Twitter and Facebook things probably need to be checked and verified and whatever more than say traditional media it just because of the nature of how inputs come and how we read it but that said it should all be considered and then we'll deal with verifying and seeing exactly what we do with the information.

In considering the varied weighted perspectives and potential judgment of an organization, Participant 5 expressed:

> Unfortunately, I think that that's how a lot of organizations are judged these days…because you know your website is being judged, you know and social media your activity…is being judged…the more activity you have the better… unfortunately, it describes how good your organization is, how successful you are so you know that's how people look at you now…Before it was enough to have a website, now not so much. You need to have a Twitter account, you need to have Facebook, you need to have Instagram, you need to have all these things going on because that's what a lot of funders are asking for because, I don't know why, but maybe it's because that just gives them more proof or more evidence that hey you're actually doing something, hey, you're actually helping people…there's some accountability involved in what you're doing.

Participant 14 also highlighted the judgment that can come from views on the SM platform and provided justification for the need of a dedicated individual to keep the SM content and pages up-to-date noting:

> Having an active fresh Facebook page really lets people know that you're active whereas you know some entities still have posts from 2017 as their first post on that is that That lets you know number one they don't have a person that updating the community or to the social media crowd of what's gone on and number two they're probably not as organized as some in some organizations that would [keep it up-to-date].

Limitations of the Study

In addition to the limitations of the study as addressed in Chapter 1, there were two other study limitations identified during the study recruitment and implementation. The first limitation of the study was the limited direct access to the intended population of nonprofit board members. As individual contact information for board members was limited and in the majority of cases non-existent because many organizations only listed the names of their board members on their website with no formal way to contact the individual member, in this study I relied on primary contact first with the organization's chief operating officers (e.g., president, executive director, CEO, etc.) and their willingness to pass the information to their board members for consideration. Without any direct contact information for board members, the buy-in of the chief operating officer of an organization was necessary to reach the population of interest. After communication with some organization's chief operating officers, many leaders made the personal choice not to participate in the study or share the information with their board members. From the recruitment efforts of this study, I experienced first-hand Kenagy et al.'s (2013) notion of potential for the CEO and organizational staff to withhold information from the board.

Another limitation was that this study specifically focused on the use of SM for nonprofit board decision-making and the information generated from external stakeholders. It did not take into account the internal use of SM platforms to engage with employees nor did it focus on the use of SM at the operational level. In their interviews, a few participants mentioned the use of SM platforms for internal communications supporting Gleba’s (2014) prediction that business will use SM as an internal tool to connect workers, ideas, and information to share ideas, solve problems, and increase decision-making abilities. However, as this study focused primarily on connecting with external stakeholders, I did not explore or further develop the idea of using SM as an internal tool. The use of SM for decision-making at an operational level and the use of SM as an internal tool to connect workers would be opportunities for further investigation in future research.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research study, there are six recommendations for further research on the topic of SM use and nonprofit organizational decision-making. The first recommendation is to replicate the study with other nonprofit boards in other geographic areas (e.g., different states, countries, etc.) to compare findings. This study focused on nonprofit organizations in Texas. There is the possibility that there are regional influencers that may affect the outcome. Using a nation-wide sample or a global sample can possibly provide further insight and information related to the topic.

In further exploration of different geographic areas, the second recommendation is to examine the use of SM in urban areas versus rural areas and how the ability to access technology influences organizational strategies. This recommendation came as a result of Participant 19’s comment on the nature of being a nonprofit in a rural area:

> We've been open since 2012. We were at another facility, and we had no computer service whatsoever, no technology, so in the communities in the rural areas technology is sometimes limited, very limited.

For those in a rural setting within the United States or third-world nations worldwide, findings based on the use of SM for nonprofit organizational decision-making could possibly be significantly different as a result of having limited or no technology or Internet access.

The third opportunity for future research is to investigate the relationship SM plays between organizations that are affiliates of larger organizations. Participant 17 described the challenges from an affiliate perspective noting, “One of my biggest hurdles was to get privileges to post here.” As many nonprofits are affiliates of larger organizations, in the future researchers could explore the dynamic between SM use at the affiliate level versus the larger organization to gain a further understanding of the balance and messaging of SM strategy.

The fourth and fifth areas of opportunity for further investigation in future research are examining the use of SM for decision-making at an operational level and the use of SM as an internal operational tool to connect workers. A few participants mentioned in their interviews the use of using SM platforms for internal communications supporting Gleba’s (2014) prediction that business will use SM as an internal tool to connect workers, ideas, and information to share ideas, solve problems, and increase decision-making abilities. Future researchers can also explore SM use and personnel policies related to personal SM accounts. Participant 6 expressed the need for employee training and guidelines and mentioned:

> We’ve had to work hard with our staff about what they will and will not post on [their personal] social media about different controversial topics that would affect

> our organization…we don’t tell people what to post, but we do ask that they stay away from certain topics that would upset our constituents or that would be extremely controversial…we also do training for our [staff] on how they use social media to build community and not to be divisive.

Lastly, the sixth recommendation for future research is to explore those organizations that have a disciplined and continuous approach to SM use in order to find best practices and ways to be impactful with a SM strategy and approach. Within the current study, very few organizations had thought-out approaches to SM use. As mentioned by Participant 17, “I don't have an organized strategic approach to even how I use our Facebook page is really saying that if I have time, you know, I get in and do things.”

Participant 3 discussed the importance of strategy stating:

> Content is the driver you can’t just bang people over the head with the same message in the same way, you need to figure out creative, interesting ways to frame your message and to a degree entertain people…The other key with social media is not just only unpolished, it should be unpolished, unlike your website, and authentic, but it has to be interactive.

Ideas presented throughout the interview process suggested that organizations need to unite around a single SM strategy where there is a deliberate and concentrated effort placed on content generation, the frequency of posting information to platforms, and tracking of SM analytics in order for SM to be effective for the organization. Therefore, it would be beneficial to further study ways in which nonprofit organizations can implement and execute SM strategies successfully.

Implications

Decisions made by the board of directors in a nonprofit organization not only impacts the operations of the nonprofit but can also have an underlying impact on the community at-large. In the last decade, SM has provided organizations with a new tool to advance operations both internally and externally. SM has the ability to become a platform for collaborations that can link individuals and organizations together to provide support and increased value and benefit to the surrounding communities. Using alternative forms of collecting data to supplement and inform traditional data sources, can benefit the organizations and communities by generating options and solutions that may not be as accessible by means of conventional and traditional data collection methods.

Practical Contributions of the Study

Practical contributions of the study include gaining a further understanding and insight of SM use within nonprofit organizations. As online SM platforms become more immersed with social consciousness, it will be important for nonprofit boards and leaders to be able to understand how to effectively manage, lead, and execute decisions in the evolving SM-focused environment. Using SM as a two-way communication channel with external stakeholders has the potential to benefit the organization as well as the community-at-large by allowing the mass population to not only drive the area of focus but also to contribute ideas and solutions. This also allows the stakeholders to have a connection to the organization and the ability to make a specific contribution, which increases their loyalty to the organization. Using the information generated from SM platforms provides the organizations with alternative methods of obtaining and supplementing stakeholder-related information. Using data generated from SM, organizations can make decisions and take actions consistent and in alignment with what is trending not only internally in the organization but also externally based on real-time social concerns.

Implications for Social Change

In a rapidly changing environment, more organizations are focusing management efforts on strategies to prepare their organizations to remain relevant, competitive, and capable to mitigate any future organizational challenges. According to Christiansen and Sezerel (2013), organizations need to understand and examine the factors that will affect overall future organizational performance. Given the ever-changing technological advances that provide increased opportunities for individuals to link and connect, organizations must be responsive to the changing environments so that the board and leaders can make the most appropriate decisions within specific given circumstances.

When considering the study in relation to positive social change, Gleba (2014) predicted that the next wave of SM would bring more focus to using SM as an internal tool to solve problems, share ideas, and increase decision-making abilities; therefore, it is necessary to increase the understanding of the phenomenon of SM and its potential use to improve decision-making in nonprofit organizations. As new technologies of SM further increase connectivity among the masses, nonprofit organizations gain new ways to inform decision-making. As the traditional way of connecting with stakeholders expand through platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, individuals have increased personal influence to advance social issues important to the respective individual and their community. Gaining the perspective of different people with different mindsets through the use of SM can provide nonprofit organizations with a platform for impacting social change.

Social Change Methods

When determining social change methods, organizations that understand how to leverage SM have the potential to extend their reach to connect with stakeholders (Huang et al., 2016), thus allowing for more data to inform organizational decision-making. In using the information and feedback generated from SM, the organization has the potential to learn from the experiences of others. Using SM to inform decision-making creates a human-centered design allowing for an alternative way that nonprofit organizations can design programs and services from the point of view of the people served. Viewing and considering the information generated on SM specific to the organization gives the board members another avenue to be present fully in the current, real-time dialogue and social concerns of stakeholders. Additionally, organizations that understand how to leverage SM have a way to take advantage of opportune moments and apply the information to improve decisions. While there is variation in nonprofit boards, the findings of this study may apply to the larger population of nonprofit organizations.

Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of SM and its potential use for decision-making in nonprofit organizations. Finding from the study, based on the analysis of data collected by interviewing 25 nonprofit board members and leaders from nonprofit organizations in

Texas indicate that nonprofit boards rarely consider the information generated from SM to contribute to organizational decision-making purposes. While nonprofit boards are not in opposition to using SM as a decision-making tool, boards rarely view SM as an organizational priority. Finding from the study support that the use of SM as a tool becomes a consideration once the organization’s essential operations are stable allowing for the focusing of efforts on other structural and operational areas, including SM. While nonprofit organizations acknowledge a need for SM and have an interest in its capabilities and usage, there remains a disconnect between the potential of SM to improve board-level decision-making and organizational practices and the application of SM for this purpose that presents both a unique challenge and a significant opportunity.

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Appendix A: Letter of Cooperation

Organization Name
Organization Address

Date

Dear Organization Contact Name,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Use of Social Media to Enhance Nonprofit Organizational Decision-Making within the Insert Name of Organization. As part of this study, I authorize you to collect data from individual board members. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: providing contact information for our board members for recruitment purposes. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that the student will not be naming our organization in the doctoral project report that is published in Proquest.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,
Authorization Official
Contact Information

Walden University policy on electronic signatures: An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically. Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Electronic signatures are only valid when the signer is either (a) the sender of the email, or (b) copied on the email containing the signed document. Legally an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. Walden University staff verify any electronic signatures that do not originate from a password-protected source (i.e., an email address officially on file with Walden).

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Script

Hello, my name is Lindsey Pena and I am a PhD student at Walden University working towards my Ph.D. in Leadership and Organizational Change. Thank you for participating in the research project on nonprofit board decision-making and social media. The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of SM and its use for decision-making in nonprofit organizations.

For participation in the study, organizations selected met the following criteria: the nonprofit organization (a) has a valid 501(c)(3) designation and files an IRS Form 990; (b) has been in operation for a minimum of 5 years; (c) has board members serving on a voluntary basis and are not receiving any compensation for their time and contributions; and (d) currently uses some form of SM and is an instrumental or advanced user per Brandtzaeg's (2010) unified media-user typology framework. Participation in the study is on a voluntary basis. If there are any questions you do not feel comfortable answering, please let me know. Additionally, the interview can stop at any time if requested. There will be a total of 7 questions. Information obtained through the interview process will be compiled with other participant responses to contribute to the findings of the project. Prior to the interview, you received a copy of the interview questions along with further information about how the interview will be conducted. As a reminder, I will review this process with you now.

The interview will be audio recorded and notes will be taken on the responses received. Each participant will have access to a transcript of their own audio recording and notes taken throughout their individual interview and will be given an opportunity to review and make any corrections to capture an accurate representation of the information provided. You will receive this information in an e-mail no later than one week after the interview. If there are any corrections, I would ask that an e-mail with the specific corrections be sent to [redacted] no later than one week after receiving the transcript.

All participants will remain anonymous and any specific information pertaining to individual interviews will be coded to maintain confidentially. The information obtained in this study may be published, exhibited in a student discussion forum, or presented at academic conferences or professional meetings.

Are there any questions? The interview will now begin.

Interview Questions

1. Please describe your board's organizational decision-making process and discuss how the organization collects and uses data to inform decisions?
2. Describe how the organization provides a representation and voice of stakeholders in organizational decisions?
3. Describe how is social media, specifically Facebook and/or Twitter used by your organization?

   -for fundraising

   -for service delivery

   -for policy advocacy
4. Describe/discuss what you think social media use is doing for your organization?

5. From your experience, how does your organization use data generated from stakeholders through Facebook and Twitter for decision-making?
6. From your experience, are there opportunities where information generated from social media by outside participants and stakeholders can be used to contribute to the organization?
7. What are the organizational barriers to incorporating the information generated from social media into organizational decisions?

Closing Remarks

This concludes the interview. Thank you for your time and contribution to the study. For further information in the study or the interview, please send an e-mail to [redacted]. I will provide an e-mail follow-up to e-mail inquiries within 2-business days.

Appendix C: Confidentiality Agreement

Lindsey Lowe Pena:

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this research: Use of Social Media to Enhance Nonprofit Organizational Decision-Making I will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement, I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.
4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.
5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.

6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.
7. I will only access or use systems or devices I'm officially authorized to access and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature: Date:

Appendix D: Interview Question Response Summary

1. Please describe your board's organizational decision-making process and discuss how the organization collects and uses data to inform decisions?

Theme	Percentage
Formal Organizational Decision-Making Process	82%
Board Structure Contributes Information	43%
Executive Director Supplies Information	37%
Sub Committees Provide Information	30%
Social Media is Used	26%
Surveys to Collect Information	21%
Dashboard/ Information Packets	13%
Employees Contribute Feedback	4%

2. Describe how the organization provides a representation and voice of stakeholders in organizational decisions?

Theme	Percentage
Board Member Makeup/Matrix	65%
Membership Meetings/Annual Meeting	17%
Executive Director Input	17%
Open Access to Board Members	8%
Board Member Touchpoints	8%
Through the use of Social Media	8%
Conduct Surveys	8%
Newsletters	8%
Employee Input	8%

3. Describe how is social media, specifically Facebook and/or Twitter used by your organization?

-for fundraising

-for service delivery

-for policy advocacy

Theme	Percentage
Fundraising	65%
Service Delivery	100%
Policy/Advocacy	13%

4. Describe/discuss what you think social media use is doing for your organization?

Theme	Percentage
Awareness	52%
Revenue	43%
Making Connections	35%
Broadcasting/Spreading Message	21%
Very Little	13%

5. From your experience, how does your organization use data generated from stakeholders through Facebook and Twitter for decision-making?

Theme	Percentage
It does not use social media data	72%
Planning	26%
Statistics	13%
Complaint Resolution	9%

6. From your experience, are there opportunities where information generated from social media by outside participants and stakeholders can be used to contribute to the organization?

Theme	Percentage
Sharing of Information	35%
Sharing Other Information	26%
Comments to Consider	26%
Organizational Presence	22%

7. What are the organizational barriers to incorporating the information generated from social media into organizational decisions?

Theme	Percentage
Time	30%
No Dedicated Individual	30%
Cost	26%
Not Technical	22%