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Analyzing the Role of Facebook for Raising Social Health Issues (1430 words)

Introduction

Today, online social media has been great means to build relationships with other people in our society. Online social network is one of the “virtual community that is designed to allow members to build relationships with other members of the community (Martínez-Pérez et al., 2014).” People can easily get encouragements on Facebook by looking at posts written by others, comments, and reactions (Martínez-Pérez et al., 2014). Parkinson’s Disease (Parkinson) is one of the publicly well-known neurodegenerative diseases, which is untreatable and weakens central nerve system (Martínez-Pérez et al., 2014). Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson’s Research (MJFF Parkinson) is one of the biggest organizations, which is highly devoted to discovering cure for the disease through funded research (The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research, n.d.). By exploring Facebook page owned by MJFF Parkinson, we will explore how they actively utilize social media to advocate and promote their works through various types and modes of posts and instigate user engagement.

Background & Related Study

Currently, there are about 250,000 people on average registering on Facebook, which makes organizations to feel necessary to make use of the social media (Waters et al., 2009). Especially, non-profit organizations utilize social media space to share, interconnect, and enlighten users about their purpose and services. Many non-profit organizations actively use social media, and the number of non-profit organizations surpass the number of for-profit organizations (Cho et al., 2014). Compared to Twitter, which is another big social platform, Facebook is more used by informant groups because Facebook lets the organizations to publicize with longer posts without any restraints when Twitter has word limits, which makes it hard to be thoroughly informative (Martínez-Pérez et al., 2014).

According to previous research done by Waters et al., there are three approaches behind creating successful alliance to users. One of the procedures is disclosure. The organizations need to show and open to public on its background and purposes, which can be done through redirecting people to their own websites (Waters et al., 2009). Their logos and other visual aids would be used to instantly build interconnection between the users and the organization. Another important element to consider is usefulness. The most widely used method to communicate information include “posting links to external news items about organization or its causes; posting photographs, video, or audio files from organization and its supporters, and using the message board or discussion wall to post announcements and answer questions (Waters et al., 2009).”

People making use of social media has been effective for prevention and treatment of some diseases and health awareness such as smoking, cancer, and HIVs. According to the research done by Martinez-Perez et al., 48 percent of the groups related to Parkinson on Facebook is established by organization, foundation, or association (Martínez-Pérez et al., 2014). Even though more people are suffering from Dementia, Facebook users tend to have more attentiveness for Parkinson. The research presumes that it is because symptoms can be more easily seen for Parkinson than Dementia.

To explore further on how organizations employ social media, I have selected and focused on Facebook page owned by MJFF Parkinson. Currently, the MJFF Parkinson page has 890,000 followers, who read, share, and interact with posts written by MJFF Parkinson. To investigate on how non-profit

organizations use Facebook to raise awareness and encourage user engagement, I intend to answer following research questions:

How does comments, number of sharing, and number of likes differ by categories or types of posts on Parkinson's Disease posted by MJFF Parkinson? Which of the type encourages user engagement the most?

Method

Data

To answer the research questions stated above, I have selected to focus on one of the non-profit organizations, which actively moves and studies on Parkinson: Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research. Their Facebook page has 890,000 followers and they diligently share and engage with the followers until today. The posts from MJFF Parkinson Facebook page were collected manually. I have chosen the timeframe to be December 2021 because the month is considered as national month of giving. With the Christmas tradition, people tend to keep their donation until December, which makes most of non-profit organizations to raise more than 50 percent of their total funding during the year (*Month of giving - December 2022*).

The collected post sums up to 44 in total for the whole month of December. Also, I have chosen the year 2021 because during COVID-19, average minutes spent on social media increased by 10 minutes from 2019 (before Covid) (Published by S. Dixon & 2, 2022). The contents will be only created and shared by MJFF since the page is solely managed by the organization. The text, date, and number of likes, shares, and comments were manually scored.

Analysis

Through qualitative content analysis and thorough analysis on subsets of the data, I have created coding scheme to categorize types of posts as four labels: Advertisement, Events, Informational, and Insights. In addition, I have included frequently appearing words to have guidelines and clear boundaries between each category. The following table is the coding scheme I used to label each post with an example for the guidance.

Types of Posts	Description	Example
Advertisement	Posts that advertise on donation and fundraising events to the audience. Posts that ask followers for supports and participation to reach the goals like the amount of fundraising. Asks for active participation to achieve the goal.	“2021 is not over, and neither is our work to end Parkinson’s disease. ... Help us reach 2000 donors in 48 hours. Support urgent year-end funding now.” <i>Frequent words: “your”, “with”</i>
Events	Posts with announcements on webinars or virtual events.	“Join us tomorrow at 1 p.m. ET for our Third Thursday Webinar” <i>Frequent words: “our”, “at”, “coming”</i>
Informational	Posts used to inform about Parkinson’s disease or the organization to the users. The forms of distributing information can be news article, podcast, and progress report.	“Are you interested in speeding new and groundbreaking treatments and a cure? Our latest podcast discusses the critical value recently diagnosed individuals bring to Parkinson’s research.”

		<i>Frequent words: “about”, “more”</i>
Insights	Posts that are used to inspire the followers through interviews, donor nominations, and legacies. There are variety of inspirational story sources such as study participants and people diagnosed with Parkinson. Also, organization arouses inspiration through expressing one’s gratitude in participating or supporting.	<p>“Four participants share why they joined the study that could change everything.”</p> <p>“Thank you to our community for all of your support.”</p> <p><i>Frequent words: “more”, “who”, “his”, “our”</i></p>

Table 1. Definition and Examples of Types of Posts

To quantify the user engagement, number of likes, comments, and shares were collected manually. Because the number of posts for each category was different, I calculated average number and percentage distribution for each element.

Results

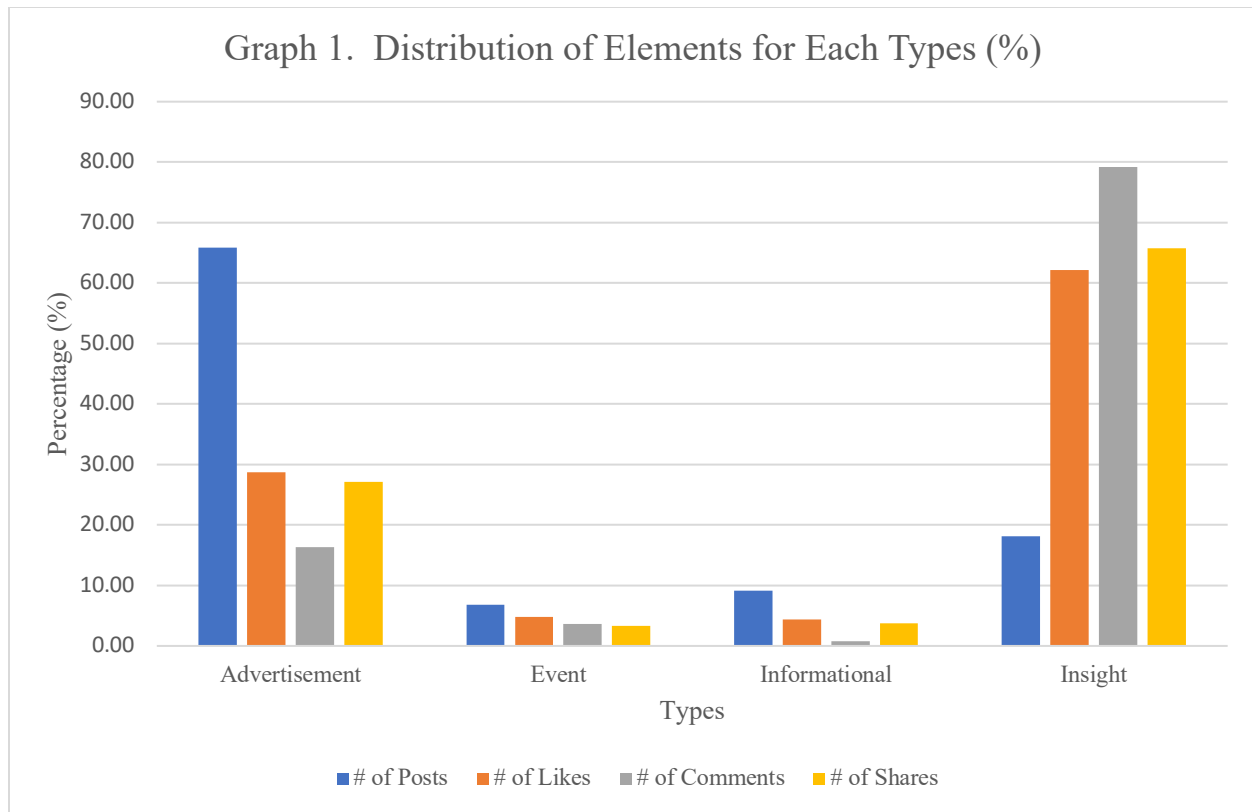
Following table shows the average number of comments, likes, and shares for each label:

Type	Number of Posts	Average Number of Comments	Average Number of Likes	Average Number of Shares
Advertisement	29	1.38	93.07	6.76
Event	3	3.00	151.00	8.00
Informational	4	0.50	103.00	6.75
Insights	8	24.25	730.25	59.38
Overall	44	5.57	213.77	16.41

Table 2. Average Number of Each Elements for Types of Posts and Overall

Looking at the table above, despite the big difference in number of posts, posts related to insights had the highest average for each element. For one post on insights, there are 24.25 comments, 730.25 likes, and 59.38 shares on average. Even though, from the sample data, “advertisement” had the highest number of posts out of 44, it had the lowest average number of likes. When compared to the overall mean, the other three topics (advertisement, event, and informational) had much lower average when “insights” had much higher average.

Following graph shows the distribution of number of comments, likes, and shares by the percentage for each category:



Looking at the graph above, the ratios of advertisement and insight were big compared to event and informational posts. Both “advertisement” and “insight” made up 84.09 percent of the total collected posts. Out of total collection, “insight” received 62.11%, 79.18%, and 65.79% of the likes, comments, and shares as it follows. Therefore, we can observe that insight posts cause the most user engagement and organization prefers advertisement posts on its Facebook page. From the results, despite its limitations, we can presume that posts labeled as advertisement and insight is the most effective method in bringing about involvement from the followers and the other people.

Conclusion and Limitations

In conclusion, with substantial growth in social media, its usage has become crucial for non-profit organization such as MJFF Parkinson to engross people and publicize. Through this research, we can perceive that level of user engagement differs greatly by the types of post. Also, the distribution of types varies a lot. We can comprehend that insight posts generates the most participation of the followers on Facebook page.

For further and thorough research, we would have to look at the whole year instead of specific month. Since, December is known as national giving month, there can be assumption on the organization to post more of advertisement posts, which encourages people to donate and fundraise. MJFF Parkinson is one of the many non-profit organizations that I chose for this study. For the future research, other non-profit organization in the health sector or even in the other sectors can be explored further.

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