Communication of Non-Governmental Organizations via Facebook Social Network

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The paper explores online communication of environmental non-governmental organizations (NGO) with their stakeholders. The aim of the research is to determine whether organizations use Facebook social network, and what communicative purpose they use it for. The subject of analysis has been firstly the transparency of NGO operations, secondly the engagement of stakeholders for the purposes of strengthening relationships and securing resources, and thirdly the potential of Facebook social network as a public relations tool that is able to ensure openness in the activities of the civil sector. Based on the conducted study, it was concluded that majority of environmental NGOs have still not developed an awareness on the benefits of this type of communication, and that only minority of organizations which do use Facebook as a public relations tool pay any significant attention to establishing of interactive dialogue with the main stakeholders. For more exhaustive conclusions and in order to explain the findings from manager's point of view, we used secondary data from surveys conducted by the NGO "Civic Initiatives", such as questionnaires and in-depth interviews with managers of non-governmental organizations. The significance of this paper is that it provides an overview of the current situation in the study area and provides theoretical background and guidance to managers and public relations practitioners for the improvement of their activities.

Keywords: *social networks; Facebook; communication; environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs); the Internet.*

Introduction

A current trend in the study of public relations (PR) is a research into the implications that the Internet has for activists and non-profit groups (Kent *et al.,* 2003; Briones *et al.,* 2011; Ingenhoff & Koelling, 2009; Hyunjin *et al.,* 2009). The Web brings the organization members to a relational space together and can be a relevant channel for NGOs to communicate their messages and erect public support for confronting issues (Kang & Norton, 2004). Back in the mid-nineties in the USA, non-governmental organizations began to develop their presence on the Internet and to adopt new technologies, using them in their daily work and communication with various target audiences (Custard, 2007). Once a medium for information retrieval and exchange of electronic mail took place, World Wide Web has grown into a comprehensive platform for social interaction and collaboration with rich communication capabilities (Mukherjee, 2010).

The increase in the availability of the Internet connections and great popularity of Facebook among the Internet users in Serbia opens up opportunities for non-governmental organizations to improve relations with their stakeholders through online communication in order to increase transparency, inform the public about current issues the organization is dealing with, provide additional material and human resources for achievement of their goals, and establish and strengthen relationships with stakeholders by means of interaction.

Based on a study conducted in Serbia (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2011) there has been a noticeable increase in the number of the Internet connections in Serbian households and businesses. In 2011, 41,2 % of households had an Internet connection, which make an increase of 8 % in comparison with 2008. The penetration rate of the Internet connections in Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (Serbia) is 42 %. When it comes to companies, 97,2 % of them have the Internet connection, which means that there were 5,7 % more connections than in 2008. The trend in Serbia towards an increasing number of the Internet connections has created the potential for increase in the number of users of social media. Therefore it could be said that social media is a revolutionary new trend that should be of interest to organizations that are active in the online space, or any space, for that matter (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Curtis *et al.,* 2010).

Zerfass *et al.,* (2012) in their study, which included 1146 PR professionals from 43 countries, estimated that in 2014 social media will be a dominant channel and instrument for addressing stakeholders, gatekeepers and audiences, right alongside online communication and online media. It is expected that during the period of 2012-2014 this communication channel will grow by as much as 37 %, which is a higher growth rate than any of the communication channels analyzed. Among the communication tools of social media, it is estimated that online communities (social networks) are the leading platforms in terms of their significance for communication management. Among the social networks Facebook is the most popular (Alexa Internet, Inc., 2012). As of the end of March 2012 it had 901 million registered monthly active users, out of which there was an average of 526 million daily active users (Facebook, 2012). When it comes to the

number of registered users in relation to other countries, Serbia, with 3,298,560 users, occupies 46th position (SocialBakers, 2012). In Serbia, 4 out of 5 (80,32 %) users of the Internet have Facebook profiles, which represent almost half of the population (44,91 %) (SocialBakers, 2012). Allen, Marwick, & Stein (1996) find that an incredible rise of Internet use has lead to changes in the demographic picture of the users. Instead of young, well-educated white men with high incomes, the demographic picture is now gender-balanced and displays more ethnic and socio-economic diversity. For this reason non-profit organizations have the opportunity to reach a whole new audience via the Internet.

The research problem was an improvement of communication of non-governmental organizations via Facebook social network. *The objective of this paper* was to describe and analyze in which manner their web content directly engages the target audience in online communication. NGOs need to pay special attention to information and interaction in order to increase transparency, provide additional material and human resources and strengthen relationships with the stakeholders, who include donors, members, volunteers, community, government and others.

As importance of NGOs in the international arena grows, transparency, accountability and cooperation with government are becoming increasingly important issues (Lawrence & Sheila, 2009; Saxton & Guo, 2011). Also, scandals within the NGO sector have driven the need for greater accountability and greater insight into the work of non-profit organizations (Hackler & Saxton, 2007). To increase transparency, non-governmental organizations have to provide their stakeholders with as much information as possible about themselves on the one hand, and their activities on the other.

Corby and Sowards (2000) encourage nonprofit organizations to view the Internet as a channel to communicate their messages about their mission and programs. Berman, Abraham, Battino, Shipnuck, & Neus (2007, as cited in Waters *et al.,* 2009) suggest that "for full disclosure, organizations must make sure to provide a detailed description of the organization and its history, use hyperlinks to connect to the organization's Web site, provide logos and visual cues to establish the connection, and list the individuals who are responsible for maintaining of social networking site profile" (p. 103).

According to the research conducted by Civic Initiatives (2011), only 6 % of volunteers are recruited in traditional way, through advertisements and posted vacancies, recommendations and informal contacts, while 21% of them apply on their own, if they are interested in solving a particular problem. Strategic use of the Web provides alternative ways in which nonprofits can recruit volunteers (Kanter & Fine, 2010).

Nonprofit organizations are battling to keep not just their volunteers but their donors too, constantly looking for new ones. However, the costs of this search, which means the use of traditional channels to collect donations, are high (Boeder, 2002). As Waters (2007) sugest larger, well known organizations such as the American Cancer Society and the Salvation Army kept their fundraising expenditures low by giving donors the opportunity to give money to the organization through their own Internet servers.

Through interaction with shareholders, on Facebook or other social media applications, organizations are looking for development of relationships with target audiences (Waters *et al.,* 2009). Citizens' participation in decision making influences their lives and is the imperative of contemporary democratic society (Roberts, 2004). According to Neverauskas & Tijunaitiene (2007), the interest in processes of citizens' participation is increasing every day. Social networking sites provide organizations with space for this interaction and allow users to connect and engage with others around the topics of mutual interest (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009). Another important issue for nonprofit organizations is that social interaction technologies allow users to share their views and opinions, and to provide feedback, in order to improve the activities of organization (Finin *et. al.,* 2005).

The aim of the research was to gain an insight into the use of Facebook social network in the domain of online communication between environmental organizations in the civil sector and their stakeholders, therefore a study has been conducted on the purpose of answering the following research questions:

RQ1: Do non-governmental organizations dealing with the protection of the environment use Facebook social network to communicate with their stakeholders?

RQ2: Which form of communication with stakeholders environmental NGOs use Facebook for?

The research methods included two stages. The first phase was a collection of data and the second phase was a content analysis.

The novelty of the research is analysis of interactive elements, which became a dominant feature of online communication via social networks.

Methodology

The research encompassed a population of 187 registered NGOs operating on the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina in the field of environmental protection. In the first phase of the research, a sample for the research was created using a database taken from the Provincial Secretariat for Urban Planning, Construction and Environmental Protection. The database was created from applications of environmental NGOs for funding allocations from the budget of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina in the period from 2008 to 2012.

When the data were collected it was found that one organization in fact was not involved in environmental protection, the activity for which it was registered, and it was therefore excluded from further analysis. The final sample in the study thus encompassed 186 environmental non-governmental organizations, which were divided into local and regional/national, depending on the focus of activity.

During the study it was noticed that the organizations used all three forms of Facebook profile: Facebook page, Facebook group and personal profile. Based on the freedom of access to Facebook profile content, profiles were divided into open and closed. Closed profiles included all profiles that required administrator's permission to access content and participate in activities.

Table 1

Elements of the environmental NGOs' Facebook profiles

Basic information	Information about their work	Interaction	Engagement
• Description; • History; • Mission of the association; • URL address; • Logo; • Web page administrators.	• News ; • External links to news; • Info photos; • Info video files; • Info audio files; • Project summaries ; • Press releases; • RSS feeds; • Subscription to newsletter.	• Discussion on the wall; • Announcements (30 days); • Polls; • Photos; • Video files; • Audio files; • Twitter URL; • URL to other associations.	• E-mail of organization; • Phone number; • Calendar of events; • Volunteer opportunities; • Donations.

In the second phase, the content of NGO Facebook profiles was analyzed (content analysis). Data on the analyzed elements were collected by hand. As part of the research, 29 elements of Facebook profiles were analyzed (see Table 1), which were divided into four groups: information about the association (disclosure), dissemination of information about the association (information dissemination), involvement in the activities of the association (involvement) and interaction with stakeholders through the network (interaction). Analyzed elements were chosen based on another paper that also dealt with the use of Facebook for the engagement of stakeholders by NGOs (Waters *et al.,* 2009). In addition to the elements in the aforementioned paper, a fourth group was added referring to interaction, the consequence of the trend in the use of social interactive technology by non-profit organizations, which offers unique opportunity to develop relationships with key stakeholders through two-way communication (Waters, 2010). In the statistical analysis, the following methods were used: the χ^2 test, the Mann-Whitney test and the method of principal components.

Results

The aim of this paper was to determine whether environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs) use Facebook social network to communicate online, and if they do, for what purpose; whether to provide information about their work, basic information about their organization, in order to establish interaction or to engage their stakeholders. Of the total sample, 70 organizations (38 %) have Facebook profiles, out of which 43 organizations (61 %) have open profiles and 27 organizations (39 %) have closed profiles. 20 organizations (29 %) have Facebook profiles but have no website. With regard to their focus of activity, 43 organizations act at the local level, 22 at the regional level, while 5 organizations strive to cover both levels through their activities. The sampled organizations have a mean of 442 Facebook friends or fans (sd=839,633), although support varies from a high of 3570 members to a low of only one.

Table 2

Frequency of analyzed elements on Facebook pages of environmental non-governmental organizations

		All NGOs	Local NGOs	National NGOs
Basic information	Description	47 (23)	30 (18)	21 (6)
	History	30 (40)	17 (31)	16 (11)
	Mission statement	45 (25)	28 (20)	21 (6)
	URL	35 (35)	23 (25)	15 (12)
	Logo	41 (29)	28 (20)	17 (10)
	Web page administrators	11 (59)	7 (41)	5 (22)
Information about their work	News	49 (21)	33 (15)	20 (7)
	External links to news	21 (49)	13 (35)	9 (18)
	Info photos	59 (11)	41 (7)	23 (4)
	Info video files	20 (50)	12 (36)	10 (17)
	Info audio files	1 (69)	0 (48)	1 (26)
	Project summaries	6 (64)	6 (42)	0 (27)
	Press releases	7 (63)	4 (44)	3 (24)
	Subscription to RSS feeds	4 (66)	2 (46)	2 (25)
	Subscription to newsletter	0 (70)	0 (48)	0 (27)
Interaction	Discussion on the wall	60 (10)	40 (8)	25 (2)
	Announcements (30 days)	46 (24)	30(18)	21(6)
	Polls	6 (64)	3 (45)	3 (24)
	Photos	51(19)	34 (14)	22 (5)
	Video files	34 (36)	24 (24)	13 (14)
	Audio files	0 (70)	0 (48)	0 (27)
	Twitter URL	3 (67)	3 (45)	0 (27)
	URL to other associations	5 (65)	4 (44)	1 (26)
Interaction	E-mail of organization	32 (38)	19 (29)	15 (12)
	Phone number	14 (56)	8 (40)	6 (21)
	Calendar of events	12 (58)	7 (41)	7 (20)
	Volunteer opportunities	32 (38)	16 (32)	18 (9)
	Donations	5 (65)	2 (46)	3 (24)

[a] Frequencies are reported in the form present (not present).

The first group of analyzed elements refers to the basic information about the organization, the most frequent pieces of information being the following: description of the organization (67 %), mission of the association (64 %) and logo of the organization (59 %). When it comes to NGOs with both Facebook page and website, more than half of them (70 %) posted the URL to their website on their Facebook page, while less than half of them (43 %) posted a history of their organization on their Facebook page. Only 11 organizations (16 %) listed the administrators of their Facebook profiles.

Most often NGOs post photos (84 %) and news (70 %) on the walls of their Facebook profiles to inform the members about their work, and least often they post audio files (1 %), links to RSS feed for users to subscribe to (6%), and a summary of implemented projects (9 %). None of the chosen organizations offers an opportunity to subscribe to their newsletter on their Facebook page.

Discussions were allowed on the majority of Facebook pages (86 %). Most often organizations initiate interaction by posting photos (83 %) or text announcements (66 %) on their Facebook walls. Only 3 organizations (4 %) have links to their Twitter accounts, and only 5 (7 %) organizations have URLs to other associations.

NGOs do not use Facebook social network to engage their stakeholders. Less than half of the organizations have their e-mail address on their profile (46 %), or a posted call for volunteers (46 %) either in the form of specific action or general invitation to work with the association. Only one fifth of the organizations provided their phone number (20 %), and calendar of events was provided by only 12 organizations (17 %). Of all the studied parameters of engagement, a call for donations was the least frequent (7 %). The paper analyzes the frequency of use of the studied parameters by NGOs, in each of the four groups, as well as the extent of the variability. The results show that the average value for interaction (M = 3,27, sd = 1,26) is higher than for the other three strategies, which indicates that organizations most frequently use communication through Facebook to establish an interactive dialogue with stakeholders, and less frequently for the dissemination of general information (M = 2,99, sd = 1,72) and information about their work (M = 2,33, sd = 1,42). The least attention is paid to the possibility of involving profile members into the work and activities of the association (M = 1,36, sd = 1,24).

If we look at the presence of at least one element of the online communication strategies of NGOs on their Facebook profile, we can conclude that all the organizations have at least one element of interaction (100%), the majority has at least one piece of information about the work and activities of the association (92 %) and at least one piece of general information (90 %), while 50 organizations (71 %) have some element that encourages the engagement of stakeholders.

Use of the non-parametric Chi-square test showed a significant statistical difference between organizations which have an open profile and those with closed profiles in providing links to Twitter (χ^2 = 4,99, df = 1, p ≤ 0,05) and providing a calendar of events (χ^2 = 4,83, df = 1, p ≤ 0,05). Both parameters occur more often with the

organizations that have a closed Facebook profile.

In terms of scores, and specifically regarding the score which refers to the spread of general information about the association, there is an apparent difference between the organizations that operate at the local level and the ones that operate at the national/regional level. According to the Mann-Whitney test, non-governmental organizations which are not regionally or nationally oriented have more information on their Facebook profiles (U = 192,000; z = -1,995; p > 0.05.).

The principal component method, which was used to determine the latent structure of the data, showed that there are three principal components of the Internet communication elements that were analyzed. The first principal component explains 18,138 % of the total variance, and includes the following elements: video files, external links to news, info photos, news, discussions on the wall, info video files, photos, polls, logos, Twitter URL and calendar of events. It is observed that these dimensions describe the items related to environmental issues in the organization's field of interest. Analysis of the items showed that, for the most part, they fall into two groups: the group of interaction variables and the group of variables conveying information about the organization's activities. The first latent dimension can thus be defined as interactive information content, and it is within this dimension that NGOs vary most.

The second major component comprises 9,093 % of the total variance and is related to the following variables: phone number, e-mail of the organization, URL, press releases, project summary, logo, donations, URL to other associations. Owing to the structure of this latent dimension we can interpret it as business transparency.

The third principal component explains 8,162 % of the total variance and includes the following elements: mission, history, description of the association, calendar of events, volunteer opportunities and discussions on the wall. The third latent dimension can be defined as general information. The main dimensions (interactive information content and general information) are almost independent, which means that they do not necessarily appear together on the Facebook profiles of the non-governmental organizations. The logo, discussion on the wall and calendar of events are variables whose variances are divided into two components (i.e. they have a significant projection on the two components).

Discussion

NGOs involved in the protection of the environment largely still do not recognize the importance of online communication with their stakeholders. The research results correspond to the earlier study conducted by the Civic Initiatives (2011) according to which most organizations promote their work, program and projects in the local media and informally, and neglect social networks. Slightly more than one third of non-governmental organizations use Facebook as a channel of communication but do not use the vast majority of available Facebook applications, which corresponds to the results of (Waters *et al.,* 2009).

The content analysis of 70 Facebook profiles shows that the majority of ENGOs focus mainly on establishing interaction with their stakeholders, while less attention is paid to informing and engaging the target audience. Interaction is achieved partially, most often with members of the association, through discussions and by uploading photos on the wall of the Facebook profile. As regards communication with the media, donor organizations or other non-governmental associations, Facebook plays no significant role. If we start from the fact that the prevailing problem for most non-governmental organizations in bringing projects to realization is the lack of financial resources (Civic Initiatives, 2011), as well as the fact that non-governmental organizations supported by international donors can influence local government more easily (Taylor & Doerfel, 2002), it is surprising that only 7 % of the sampled organizations posted calls for donations on their Facebook profiles.

Media is an important factor that affects the operation of NGOs because it provides public support for action as well as better understanding of the mission of the association (Biswas, 2007). According to (Yang & Taylor, 2010), building of good ground for the relationship with the public is achieved by using a number of online communication tools, in particular the publication of high quality statements about the results of completed projects. Previously conducted studies have shown that managers of NGOs see the attitude toward customers and presence in the media as being key factors for building the public image of the organization (Civic Initiatives, 2011), but they clearly do not apply this in practice since only 10 % of organizations have provided press releases about the work and activities of their association on their Facebook profiles.

In addition to the relationship which NGOs have with donors and media, the third aspect of interaction involves NGOs' inter-organizational relationship. Cooperation among non-governmental organizations enables sharing of feedback and best practices with other non-governmental associations (Shumate *et al.,* 2010), as well as coordination, where joint action is needed (Brown & Kalegaonkar, 2002). However, most ENGOs do not have links to other environmental organizations on their Facebook profiles (93 %), which indicates a lack of the kind of cooperation among NGOs that is essential for the survival and development of the civil sector (Taylor & Doerfel, 2002).

On most Facebook profiles, up-to-date applications for online communication have not been used. The results show that none of the sampled organizations has a subscription option for their newsletter, and only 6 % are offering a subscription to RSS feed on their Facebook profiles, even though RSS technology today is a dominant method of disseminating frequently updated content on the Internet (Petrovic *et al.,* 2005). The cause may lie in the fact that most of NGOs had no training for their staff in the last three years (Civic Initiatives, 2011) and therefore administrators do not have knowledge enough to take advantage of all the facilities of Facebook as public relations tool.

Of the sampled organizations, 39 % have closed Facebook profile, which prevents general public accessing the information. Although these associations devote more attention to establishing interaction with the members,

controlling access to information serves to reduce their public visibility. Insight into the results suggests that NGOs are not aware of the significance of transparency, especially considering the erosion of confidence in the NGO sector, where organizations have to take responsibility for restoring credibility and regaining public trust in civil society (Tkalac & Pavicic, 2003).

Despite the spread of the transnational environmental movement, a global focus is not reflected in the orientation of environmental associations (Andrews & Edwards, 2005), which is confirmed by the survey results. Most environmental non-governmental organizations have a focus of activity which is at the local level. Locally-oriented organizations, which focus on the immediate environment, city or county, usually implement a place-based environmental strategy, with the direct involvement of citizens in the conservation of specific ecosystems through good neighborly relations, joint projects and dialog policy (Andrews & Edwards, 2005). One of the instruments for the implementation of the strategy is the dissemination of general information about the association, which is more present on Facebook profiles of NGOs that are not regionally oriented.

Facebook profile, as an innovative PR tool, allows global dissemination of information about NGOs and two-way communication with the primary target audience. Inactive Facebook profiles, where content is not continually updated and dialog with target groups is not encouraged, are not of great importance to the association. According to the survey, environmental NGOs post, on average, 6 items (status, photos, links, videos, applications) on their Facebook profiles per month, and only one organization posts, on average, every day, which confirms the conclusion that most environmental organizations still have not developed an awareness of the benefits of this type of communication.

Conclusion

The results of the research show that majority of non-governmental organizations do not use communication via Facebook strategically, in order to engage members and encourage interaction with key stakeholders (donors, volunteers, local authorities, government agencies, the media, local community and other environmental associations). The civil sector, generally, neither realizes the potential of the Internet for establishment of two-way communication, nor recognizes the usefulness of PR tools, which corresponds to the results of previous studies of NGOs (Civic Initiatives, 2011), according to which more than half of all non-governmental organizations do not have a strategy for communication with the public.

During the research, several minor limitations were noticed, which did not influence significantly the relevance of the results, including Facebook profile names that may differ from the registered name of the NGO, which may have resulted in not finding some target pages for the analysis; a non-standard layout of Facebook profile, which made it difficult to collect and systematize data; the existence of closed Facebook groups, where the administrator's permission was required in order to access it; as well as language barriers, on pages that were created

in minority languages. The research sample, which includes environmental non-governmental organizations active in the autonomous province of Vojvodina, restricts the results to a specific type of organization and this particular region. Also, the lack of relevant scientific reading material makes it difficult to conduct research. Most papers analyze sociological and psychological aspects of the use of Facebook (Brandtzæg *et al.,* 2010; Steinfield *et al.,* 2007), and only a small number of authors analyze the way NGOs use Facebook profile as a PR tool (Waters *et al.,* 2009; Bortree & Seltzer, 2009).

The research results provide an answer to the question to what extent and for what purpose NGOs use Facebook, but they do not explain the reasons for the current situation in the civil sector. According to previously conducted studies, the most common problems of non-governmental organizations are: insufficient financial and technical support for effective presence on the Internet (Boeder, 2002; Ryan, 2003), a lack of time to devote constant attention to Facebook profile (Waters *et al.,* 2009), and failure to conduct adequate training of communication professionals (Naude *et al.,* 2004). By expanding the focus of future research to a number of regions, with various degrees of civil sector development, various types of non-governmental organization and various types of social network (Twitter, LinkedIn, MySpace, Google Plus+, Flickr, etc.), a more complex image could be obtained on public relations in the civil sector, and on all the problems that NGOs face in online communication with their target stakeholders.

Acknowledgements[1]

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Nevyriausybinių organizacijų bendravimas per Facebook socialinį tinklą

Santrauka

Dabartinę viešųjų ryšių tyrimo kryptį sudaro reikšmės, kurią internetui teikia aktyvistai ir ne pelno siekiančios grupės, tyrimas (Kent, Taylor ir White, 2003; Briones, Kuch, Liu, ir Jin, 2011; Ingenhoff ir Koelling, 2009; Hyunjin, Ji Young ir Sung-Un, 2009). Šiame darbe nagrinėjamas nevyriausybinių, aplinkos apsaugos organizacijų, bendravimas su savo partneriais prisijungus prie socialinio tinklo.

Paskutinio dešimtmečio viduryje JAV nevyriausybinės organizacijos pradėjo plėsti savo buvimą internete ir taikyti naujas technologijas, naudodamos jas savo kasdieniame darbe ir bendraujant su įvairiomis tikslinėmis auditorijomis (Custard, 2007). Interneto prisijungimo galimybių didėjimas ir didelis *Facebook* populiarumas tarp interneto vartotojų atveria galimybes nevyriausybinėms organizacijoms gerinti ryšius su savo partneriais, naudojant bendravimą prisijungus prie tinklo, norint didinti skaidrumą, informuoti visuomenę apie dabartines, organizacijoje sprendžiamas problemas, pateikti papildomą medžiagą ir žmogiškuosius išteklius savo tikslams pasiekti ir sukurti bei sustiprinti santykius su partneriais, naudojant bendravimo priemones. Taigi, **tyrimo tikslas** *yra nustatyti ar organizacijos naudoja Facebook socialinį tinklą ir kokiems bendravimo tikslams jos jį naudoja.* Analizės objektas pirmiausia buvo nevyriausybinių organizacijų (NO) veiklos skaidrumas, antra, partnerių dalyvavimas siekiant sustiprinti santykius ir apsaugoti išteklius ir trečia, *Facebook* socialinio tinklo, kaip viešųjų ryšių priemonės, galinčios užtikrinti atvirumą viešajame sektoriuje, potencialas.

Norint suprasti *Facebook* socialinio tinklo naudingumą bendravimui viešajame sektoriuje tarp aplinkos apsaugos organizacijų ir jų partnerių, buvo atliktas tyrimas. Tyrime siekta atsakyti į tokius tyrimo klausimus: Ar nevyriausybinės organizacijos, dirbančios aplinkos apsaugos srityje naudoja *Facebook* socialinį tinklą bendravimui su savo partneriais? Kokią bendravimo su partneriais formą naudoja NO *Facebook* socialiniame tinkle?

Tyrimas apėmė 187 registruotas NO, veikiančias *Vojvodina autonominėje provincijoje* (VAP), aplinkos apsaugos srityje. Pirmajame tyrimo etape buvo sukurtas modelis panaudojant duomenų bazę, paimtą iš Provincijos sekretoriato urbanistikai, statybai ir aplinkos apsaugai. Duomenų bazė buvo sudaryta iš aplinkos apsaugos NO prašymų finansavimui iš VAP biudžeto, laikotarpiu nuo 2008 iki 2012 metų. Statistinėje analizėje buvo panaudotas: χ^2 testas, Mann-Whitney testas ir pagrindinių komponentų metodas.

Remiantis atliktu tyrimu buvo padaryta išvada**,** kad dauguma aplinkos apsaugos NO vis dar nėra užtikrintos dėl tokio bendravimo naudos ir tik nedaugelis organizacijų, naudojančių *Facebook* kaip viešųjų ryšių priemonę, skiria kažkiek dėmesio, kad sukurtų interaktyvų dialogą su pagrindiniais partneriais. Norėdami daryti daug išsamesnes išvadas ir paaiškinti rezultatus nuodugniu požiūriu, mes naudojome antrinius duomenis iš NO „Civic Initiatives" atliktų apklausų, tokių kaip nevyriausybinių organizacijų vadovų anketinė apklausa ir išsamus interviu.

Šis tyrimas parodė, kad NO, dirbančios aplinkos apsaugos srityje, dažniausiai vis dar nepripažįsta šio tinklo naudingumo bendraujant. Tyrimo rezultatai atitinka ankstesnių tyrimų, kuriuos atliko „Civic Initiatives" (2011) rezultatus, kurie atskleidžia, kad dauguma organizacijų reklamuoja savo darbą, programą ir projektus vietinėje žiniasklaidoje bei neoficialiai, nesinaudodamos socialiniais tinklais. Šiek tiek daugiau nei trečdalis nevyriausybinių organizacijų naudojasi *Facebook* kaip bendravimo kanalu, bet nenaudoja daugybės galimų *Facebook* pritaikymo būdų.

70-ies *Facebook* profilių turinio analizė rodo, kad dauguma NAAO sutelkia dėmesį tik į ryšio su jų partneriais sukūrimą ir mažiau dėmesio skiria tikslinės auditorijai informuoti. Bendravimas yra pasiekiamas iš dalies, dažniausiu su asociacijos nariais, per diskusijas ir paskelbiant nuotraukas ant *Facebook* profilio sienos. Kalbant apie bendravimą, su žiniasklaidą remiančiomis organizacijomis ar kitomis nevyriausybinėmis asociacijomis, *Facebook* neatlieka svarbaus vaidmens. Dažniausiai daugelio nevyriausybinių organizacijų vyraujanti problema realizuojant projektus yra finansinių išteklių trūkumas, taip pat faktas, kad nevyriausybinės organizacijos, kurias remia tarptautiniai rėmėjai, gali daug lengviau daryti įtaką vietinei valdžiai (Taylor ir Doerfel, 2002). Tačiau nustatyta, kad tik 7 % tirtų organizacijų savo *Facebook* profilyje paskelbė kvietimą remti.

Šio darbo reikšmė yra ta, kad jis pateikia dabartinės situacijos apžvalgą ir pateikia teorinį pagrindą bei patarimus vadovams ir viešųjų ryšių praktikams dėl jų veiklos gerinimo. Dauguma darbų analizuoja sociologinius ir psichologinius *Facebook* panaudojimo aspektus (Brandtzæg, Lüders ir Skjetne, 2010; Steinfield, Ellison ir Lampe, 2008; Ellison, Steinfield ir Lampe, 2007) ir tik keli autoriai analizuoja būdus, kuriais NO naudoja *Facebook* profilį kaip viešųjų ryšių priemonę (Waters ir kt., 2009; Bortree ir Seltzer, 2009). ***Šio darbo naujumą*** sudaro interaktyvių elementų, kurie tapo dominuojančiomis savybėmis naudojant prisijungus prie tinklo per socialinius tinklus, analizė. Interaktyvumas nevyriausybinėms organizacijoms reiškia užtikrinimą, kad jų internetinis turinys tiesiogiai pritrauktų tikslinę auditoriją bendraujant prisijungus prie tinklo.

Tyrimo rezultatai duoda atsakymą į klausimą*: kokiu mastu ir kokiam tikslui NO naudoja Facebook,* bet jie nepaaiškina dabartinės situacijos viešajame sektoriuje priežasčių. Remiantis anksčiau atliktais tyrimais, dauguma, dažniausiai nevyriausybinių organizacijų, problemų yra: nepakankama finansinė ir techninė parama efektyviam pasirodymui internete (Boeder, 2002; Ryan, 2003), laiko, kurį reikia nuolat skirti *Facebook* profiliui, trūkumas (Waters ir kt., 2009) ir nesėkmės tinkamai išmokant komunikacijos profesionalus (Naude, Froneman ir Atwood, 2004). Išplečiant būsimųjų tyrimų dėmesį į regionų, kuriuose įvairus valstybinio sektoriaus plėtros laipsnis, įvairūs nevyriausybinių organizacijų tipai ir įvairūs socialinių tinklų tipai, skaičių (*Twitter, LinkedIn, MySpace, Google Plus+, Flickr,* ir t. t.), gali būti gautas daug sudėtingesnis viešųjų ryšių valstybiniame sektoriuje ir visų problemų, su kuriomis susiduria NO bendraudami su savo tiksliniais partneriais prisijungus prie tinklo, vaizdas.

Raktažodžiai: *socialiniai tinklai; Facebook; bendravimas; nevyriausybinės aplinkos apsaugos organizacijos (NAAO); internetas.*