ABSTRACT

HEATHER NOCERA. The Imagined Communities of Nonprofit Twitter. (Under the direction of Professor Huiling Ding.)

This case study explores Twitter use among non-profit organizations, specifically focusing on methods for building a strong community of followers on Twitter. Previous studies examine the way Twitter can build an “imagined community” of followers that mimics a real-life community. Past studies also emphasize using Twitter to strengthen customer relationships in large organizations. This paper attempts to merge the business and advertising concepts with the notion of an “imagined community” in order to develop an understanding of how Twitter is used in a successful nonprofit, with a strong imagined community of followers.

The study examines 114 Tweets over a 78-day observational period. The Tweets were compiled and analyzed, based on the key features found in an imagined community (common language features and temporality). The study then explores the topic choices and determines how these three components—Tweet type, language choice, and frequency of posts—are used in an imagined community of nonprofit Twitter. The case study also incorporates a 50-minute interview with a professional social media writer, exploring the goals and intentions of a nonprofit organization when using Twitter to create and engage an imagined community.