

---

# Utilizing Social Media in Making the World a Better Place

---

An analysis of ENGOs' Communication on Facebook

Student name: Linda Houwers

Student number: 510697

Supervisor: Dr. Izabela Derda

Media Studies: Media & Business

Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication

Erasmus University Rotterdam

Master's Thesis

*September 2019*

# UTILIZING SOCIAL MEDIA IN MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE

An analysis of ENGO Communication on Facebook

## ABSTRACT

As new media technologies have been on the rise, interest on the implications this has for individuals and organizations has increased. This changed online setting and new platforms have impacted the way society functions and communicates. Subsequently, it provides new opportunities and possibilities on an organizational level as well. These new developments provide challenges for businesses in determining how to use social media and what approach should be taken to benefit from its full potential. Exploring such new functions can help reflect on effective ways to utilize social media in business endeavors. Here, NGOs stand out as a special category among organizations communicating online. Their non-profit nature and different organizational goals contrast with for-profit businesses. As they act on behalf of public interest and want to bring about social change, it is important how they communicate and use social media. A theory that comes forward in multiple studies as an effective approach is the idea of strategic communication, which will be the focus of this study. Furthermore, a prevalent topic of debate in contemporary society is environmentalism. As such, a focus on environmental NGOs was chosen to highlight this specific and significant branch of organizations.

This work explores and analyses how ENGOs communicate to their stakeholders on Facebook. In doing so, it explores the way of communication in the context of a strategic communication framework. This framework takes into account six different elements: (1) Disclosure, transparency & openness, (2) Information dissemination, (3) Interactivity, (4) Engagement & relationship-building, (5) Strategic alliances, and (6) Advocacy. The study will apply an approach that is both inductive and deductive. 600 posts of four different ENGOs' Facebook pages were collected and analyzed using a system of open, axial and selective codes. The selected organizations are (1) Greenpeace International (2) The National Wildlife Federation, (3) Friends of the Earth, and (4) Earthwatch. In analyzing these four organizations, this study seeks to increase knowledge on the way in which Facebook is utilized in ENGOs communication. It will answer the question *How do ENGOs apply strategic communication on Facebook to inform about, engage on and advocate on issues regarding the environment?*

The analysis has determined in which ways ENGOs participate in strategic

communication and in which elements a different approach is taken. This has mostly resulted in deductive validation as most organizations apply every element of the strategic communication framework to a more or lesser extent. However, some deviations of this were observed and additional significant findings are discovered.

**KEYWORDS:** NGOs, Strategic Communication, Disclosure, Information dissemination, Interactivity, Engagement, Advocacy

## Table of Contents

|                                                       |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----|
| ABSTRACT.....                                         | 1  |
| 1. Introduction .....                                 | 4  |
| 2. Theoretical Framework.....                         | 8  |
| 2.1. Strategic Communication.....                     | 8  |
| 2.1.1. Disclosure, transparency & openness .....      | 10 |
| 2.1.2. Information dissemination.....                 | 12 |
| 2.1.3. Interactivity.....                             | 13 |
| 2.1.4. Engagement & Relationship-building .....       | 15 |
| 2.1.5. Strategic alliances .....                      | 18 |
| 2.1.6. Advocacy .....                                 | 20 |
| 3. Methodology .....                                  | 23 |
| 3.1. Research Design.....                             | 23 |
| 3.1.1. Qualitative content analysis approach .....    | 24 |
| 3.1.2. Sample .....                                   | 26 |
| 3.1.3. Procedure .....                                | 29 |
| 3.1.4. Data Analysis.....                             | 30 |
| 3.2. Coding Process.....                              | 31 |
| 3.3 Operationalization .....                          | 31 |
| 3.4. Validity and Reliability .....                   | 32 |
| 4. Analysis and Findings.....                         | 34 |
| 4.1. Type of Content.....                             | 34 |
| 4.2. Presenting Information.....                      | 35 |
| 4.3. Inviting and invoking engagement.....            | 38 |
| 4.4. The presence and communication of Advocacy ..... | 40 |
| 4.5. Discussion .....                                 | 41 |
| 4.5.1. Disclosure, transparency & openness .....      | 42 |
| 4.5.2. Information dissemination.....                 | 43 |
| 4.5.3. Interactivity.....                             | 43 |
| 4.5.4. Engagement & relationship-building.....        | 44 |
| 4.5.5. Strategic Alliances .....                      | 44 |
| 4.5.6. Advocacy .....                                 | 45 |
| 5. Conclusion.....                                    | 46 |
| Reference List .....                                  | 49 |
| Appendix A: The Coding Tree .....                     | 55 |

## 1. Introduction

The increasing presence of social media websites in contemporary society does not only have an influence on people's personal lives but also highly impacts how organizations market, advertise and communicate to consumers and stakeholders (Tripathi & Verma, 2018). While for-profit businesses have long recognized the merits of utilizing social media to advance their business, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have not been as fast to implement social media as an effective tool to advance their goals. However, with the rise of social media, non-governmental organizations are starting to recognize that they have a new and useful platform to turn to in obtaining their goals (Waters, 2010). As outlined by Lambell, Ramia, Nyland, & Michelotti (2008), NGOs are organizations that represent specific social groups, movements, issues and interests. Two examples of this are human rights organizations (such as Amnesty) or organizations with a focus on improving the environment and, thereby, preserving earth and everything it has to offer in terms of animals and nature (such as Greenpeace). Such organizations have an overarching organizational goal of achieving ideological improvements within these areas. Most distinctly, they are not a part of government organizations or the for-profit market (Lambell et al., 2008). This research will specifically focus on studying such environmentally focused organizations which will be referred to as ENGOs (Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations) in the rest of this work.

Unlike for-profit businesses whose main goal will always be making a profit, NGOs aim is to convey a message, to generate resources, and to actively engage their audience with a constant focus on making progress towards their overarching cause. Due to this difference, relationship-building is crucial to NGOs as they rely on stakeholders in achieving their goals (Hue, 2017). Similar to for-profit businesses' social media presence, however, NGOs' online communication requires different ways of operating than offline communications. Furthermore, it is important to recognize not just the advantages and rewards that come with social media use, but also the risks (Milde and Yawson, 2017). This leads to different and evolving communication strategies and new and innovative ways to work towards reaching objectives like engaging consumers and stakeholders, building relationships, advocating causes, and creating awareness (Tripathi & Verma, 2018). As a result of NGOs relatively new presence on social media, the number of studies on NGO social media usage seems to be limited. Because of that, there is a research gap when it comes to ENGOs' use of (strategic)

communication on Facebook in addressing, informing and engaging stakeholders. Explorations of NGOs' social media use provides insights into applied marketing and communication strategies for organizations that do not have profit-making as a (main) goal.

The concept of strategic communication comes forward as an effective strategy for social change in numerous studies. As Patterson & Radtke (2009) highlight, NGOs struggle to spread their mission and message in a time of information overflow, especially online. They argue that strategic communication is the most successful strategy for NGOs because it has a combined focus on mission, target audience and encouraging action. It can improve organizational reputation, relationship-building and helps in working towards achieving successful social change (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). Therefore, the starting point for analysis in this study will be strategic communication. Hue (2017) describes strategic communication as a mechanism in which communication is specifically used to reach organizational goals. To the best of the author's knowledge, limited research has been done on the strategic decision-making processes in relation to NGOs (Hue, 2017), which confirms the observed research gap discussed earlier. This work contributes to filling that research gap. Based on a variety of studies, Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas (2009) provide three different strategies that they argue as being crucial to successful strategic virtual communication. The first element of strategic communication that is introduced is the strategy of disclosure, transparency, and openness. The second is information dissemination and to optimize how this is done. The third element is interactivity, which has the potential to highly contribute to relationship-building and engaging stakeholders (Waters et al., 2009). These factors will function as the basis for the analysis that will be carried out.

In recent years, awareness and advocacy on environmental issues have continued to increase as concerns about topics such as climate change, pollution, and deforestation are on the rise (Hansen, 2011). As many for-profit businesses focus more on promoting such environmental awareness as part of CSR and brand image initiatives, environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS) continue to seek ways to obtain their organizational goals. As Hansen argues, how such issues and calls for action are conveyed and communicated to the public is crucial in obtaining results. Betsill & Corell (2001) outline how NGOs are playing an important part in international environmental negotiations and policies. This influential impact on a socially significant topic makes ENGOS or international NGOs with an environmental focus an interesting area for research. Therefore, this research will focus on ENGOS.

Studying the patterns of ENGOS social media communication provided insights into

contemporary online communication strategies. This exploration also indicates information on what ENGOs perceive as effective communication strategies to use on Facebook. Bortree & Seltzer (2009) identify gaps in the opportunities that the online environment offers and the way that organizations use it. Improvements can sometimes be made on elements such as disclosure, transparency & openness in this setting. Research can help in finding a way to fill such gaps. Additionally, it will create an opportunity to increase knowledge of social media as a tool for communication and how organizations can profit from using it. Comparisons can then be made between for-profit businesses and NGOs as well. The societal relevance comes from the importance for the future of focusing on improving environmental issues and engaging the public to take action. Media has proven to be crucial in ENGO communication and both media and communication play a large role in impacting society and public discourse (Jones, 2017). As such, the societal relevance of this study is to see how ENGOs communicate online and if they use Facebook to its full potential. Doing so increases their chance of success for social change and benefit the public or greater good. This study can contribute to insights on how to achieve these objectives.

This study aims to create and increase knowledge about ENGO communication on Facebook and to find patterns in their communication strategies, social media posts, and the way they address their audience. Facebook posts of four different ENGOs will be analyzed in the context of strategic communication. The analysis will be done through a coding framework of open, axial, and selective codes. Once these codes have been established, the analysis reflects upon them and compares and links them to the theory. The methods section will discuss the research design and approach in detail. The ENGOs that are studied are (1) Greenpeace International, (2) The National Wildlife Federation, (3) Friends of the Earth, and (4) Earthwatch. The analysis is centered around elements of strategic communication such as information-sharing, relationship-building, and strategical alliances. The theoretical framework of this work will set out and discuss these different elements related to strategic communication. In order to carry out this study, the following research question has been formulated: *How do ENGOs apply strategic communication on Facebook to inform about, engage on and advocate on issues regarding the environment?* The sub-questions that were formulated to support answering the research question are:

- (1) *What type of content is presented on ENGOs' Facebook pages?*
- (2) *How do ENGOs present information in their Facebook posts?*
- (3) *How do the organizations invite and invoke engagement through their Facebook posts?*

*(4) How is the element of advocacy included in the organizations' Facebook posts?*

The first section of this work will provide a theoretical framework discussing previous research on strategic communication and formulate its links and relevance to NGO communication. The next part will present the methodology of this research. It will explain the research design and emphasize how the research was carried out. Following that, the 'analysis & findings'-section will discuss the coding process and the results that came forward and relate it back to the theory. This section will also focus on answering the sub-questions formulated above. Lastly, the conclusion will provide a summary that answers the research questions, discuss limitation of the research, and provide suggestions for further research.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

To carry out this study, this theoretical framework will first provide a working definition of NGOs. Then, it will introduce the idea of strategic communication which will be the main focus of this work. In doing so, the developments in the changing communication landscape will be highlighted as well. After that, it will continue by discussing the key concepts linked to strategic communication that are essential in carrying out and understanding this research. This theoretical framework will then function as a basis that indicates expected results throughout the coding process. It will also be used as a guideline throughout the analysis in determining patterns in relation to strategic communication. The framework provides a foundation based on previous research and findings to which the results of this research can be compared and contrasted.

### 2.1. Strategic Communication

Brands have increasingly started to operate online over the past decade, thereby increasingly presenting themselves to and getting in touch with consumers through social media platforms. With that development, the need for a communication strategy that can be applied digitally has increased as well (Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011; Yan, 2011). Developing online communication can be a challenge to organizations. While social media is often praised for its many opportunities, it also has a turning side. As Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvester (2011) argued, one can choose to either ignore or participate in the communication that is happening. Both approaches will have their effect on a company but only one allows for the creation of personal influence and impact on the course of conversation. Yet, especially in the case of NGOs Kietzmann et al. (2011) equal communication to survival because it is the main and ultimate means to achieving the organization's mission. Still, as Holt (2016) discusses, brands often underestimate the complexity of moving their brand online and fail to do it in a successful way, thereby harming their brand rather than advancing it. Corporate social media 'fails' such as these are abundantly present throughout the history of companies' ventures into the online environment. An example of that is when snapchat created a 'would you rather' type quiz that they incorporated in their app as part of an interactive marketing campaign. One of the choices presented to users was centered around the sensitive domestic abuse case between Rihanna and Chris Brown. It was received very badly by many users and this attempt at taking a controversial risk to engage users backfired for snapchat (Bullock, 2018). Some companies have even opted for non-response in case of an online or public crisis, which

creates the risk that others who are present on social media will take over the narrative. Therefore, being ill-prepared or making uninformed or wrong choices in dealing with issues can also have a negative effect. Situations like these emphasize the importance of a well thought-through social approach and a balance between engagement, creating ‘buzz’, and being creative vs. taking into consideration consumer norms, values, opinions and expectations. This poses the question how brands should approach their online presence and content and what is the most effective way of utilizing social media in creating as well as maintaining brand identity and how to approach marketing and communication. Because NGOs do not fit in with the for-profit market, they should be approached differently as well which complicates matters even more.

As briefly touched upon in the introduction to this work, studies have highlighted the significance of strategic communication and how NGOs can usefully apply this strategy in working to achieve their goals, which is why this study will focus on strategic communication as a digital strategy and analyze if and how ENGOs apply it. To do this, it is important to first understand the concept of strategic communication. Strategic communication can be defined as “communicating purposefully to advance its mission” (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Verčič, & Sriramesh, 2007, p. 4), which is in line with Hue’s description that was provided earlier. Using social media can increase an organization’s reach and is an effective tool in relation to strategic communication. Hallahan et al., (2007) introduce a set of reasons why strategic communication is useful in analyzing organizational communication, especially with increasing social media communication and with a focus on NGOs. New media have reshaped communication and communication processes are increasingly affected by such new online approaches. These new channels blur the lines between advertising, publicity, promotion, etc. and, thus, contribute to communication convergence. Besides that, it provides new ways of influencing the public in relation to the organization’s mission. Rather than just conveying information and a focus on public relations, additional factors are needed in achieving organizational goals. Here, purposeful influence is regarded as the main goal of organizational communication, which essentially means that communication is at the core of the organization and should contribute to achieving the overarching goal of the organization (Hallahan et al., 2017).

A lot of articles and research argue that, in the contemporary marketing and communication environment, an organization is no longer in control of the conversation that is happening around their ‘brand’. Subsequently, they would partially be losing control over

brand identity, brand image, and so forth (Hanna et al., 2011; Kietzmann et al., 2011; Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). While to a certain extent this is undeniably true and unavoidable as well, at the same time it might be somewhat different in the case of NGOs. Their sole purpose of being online, and existing in general, is to communicate and convey a message that voices their mission and encourage people to take action. They need donors, partners and supporters, but they are not directly trying to sell a product or service. This idea of ‘selling’ a message rather than a product provides a different context (Mort, Weerawardena & Williamson, 2007). Still, it is important to do this in the most effective way and to carefully consider how the organization presents itself. Therefore, this study will focus on the application of strategic communication in an NGO context. This strategy of communication is highlighted in various studies as an effective way of handling the new communication landscape (Ciszek, 2017; Guo & Saxton, 2014; Hallahan et al., 2007; Waters, Burnett, Lamm & Lucas, 2007). Hallahan et al. (2007), for example, argue that strategic communication is especially effective for organization that “functions as a social actor to advance its mission” (p. 7), which is the case for NGOs. Strategic communication is based on intentional decisions and focuses on presentation and communication on the organization’s level. In other words, it is about what the organization posts, how it promotes itself, how it talks to consumers, what kind of content it presents, etc. This can still include things like interactive communication as a strategic decision (Hallahan et al., 2007). The changes that have occurred in how organizations can communicate to the world have changed drastically and unpredictably. This means that a framework on how to approach this new environment can be helpful to organizations and the idea of strategic communication is one way of doing so. To summarize, “strategic communication is about informational, persuasive, discursive, as well as relational communication when used in a context of the achievement of an organization’s mission” (Hallahan et al., 2007, p. 17). Taking that into account, different elements that can contribute to strategic communication and that will be considered for this study are disclosure, transparency & openness, information dissemination, engagement & relationship-building, advocacy, and strategic alliances (Guo & Saxton, 2014; Waters et al., 2009).

#### 2.1.1. Disclosure, transparency & openness

These three different terms are sometimes equalized or defined through each other, such as disclosure transparency in (Karlsson, 2010) or research that equals transparency to openness (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2015; Holzner, 2007) which shows that there is a big overlap between them. Holzner (2007) describes transparency as being honest, open,

(information) disclosure and access to certain information or data. He discusses how there is an increasing expectation towards organizations and government to provide information and be open to the public. As such, disclosure, transparency and openness are valued as an essential part of information-sharing and provision (Holzner, 2007). The idea that these practices are expected by the public is confirmed by Christensen & Cornelissen (2015). However, they express a different and more critical view of the concepts. It is argued that while the focus on disclosure, transparency and openness has increased, there is little to no critical reflection on what it entails to be transparent and open and how to determine what it means to practice disclosure. According to them, information is not necessarily as obviously linked to disclosure, transparency and openness as was done in previous research. As such, the way transparency is manifested in modern society is criticized by them. Ideas such as “seeing is knowing” and “information is knowledge” are not taken as truths (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2015, p. 133). Information that is presented and is to be taken as disclosure, transparency and openness should be without organizational interference (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2015). It seems obvious though, that this can never be fully guaranteed, as the public can never truly judge the truthfulness and neutrality of presented information.

Yet, Christensen & Cornelissen (2015) also recognize that disclosure, transparency and openness are largely perceived as significant and needed, regardless of their observations. Therefore, it is still an important element to look into. The analysis will focus on how the organizations are, or give a sense of being, transparent and open. Here, it is not just about providing information but also about being clear about things such as where the information was retrieved from and being clear about the source of data.

Disclosure is present in varying levels on a user basis, based on decisions that each user makes about their privacy, how to present themselves online, and what they decide to disclose or not to disclose to other users. However, it is also important to look at this concept on an organizational level. Like a user, a brand can decide for themselves and set boundaries as to what they choose to disclose or not. As Kietzmann et al. (2011) describe self-disclosure as part of the online identity aspect, the same can be argued for organizations. Level of disclosure, and with that transparency and openness, influences brand identity in that it has an impact on what others know about them, and consequently how they are viewed as a whole. Thereby, much like individual social media users, companies get the opportunity to present themselves in new and arguably better ways through marketing and, the focus of this research: communication.

In the contemporary internet-age, it is not enough to ‘simply’ stand out in terms of communication, but additional transparency in organization’s communication is crucial as it contributes to an organization’s coherence and legitimacy. The disclosure should go beyond legal requirements of transparency, especially with an increased reach to a critical audience that has high expectations and holds organizations responsible for their actions and decisions (Christensen, 2002). Christensen also relates this back to the idea of strategic communication, in which transparent communication is central to the organization’s existence.

Open communication is also crucial when advocating social issues which is the aim of NGOs (Seo, Kim & Yang, 2009). Waters et al. (2009) discusses the relevance of the strategy of disclosure for all kinds of organizations, both for- and non-profit. They highlight how people expect disclosure, transparency, and openness from organizations in general and how it will thus reflect positively on them. As they sum up, disclosure requires being transparent throughout all social media communication. This means that organizations should (1) be open about their history and provide clear information on their organization, (2) that they should refer to the organization’s website and make use of logos and visuals to refer to the organization and its website, and (3) that they need to be clear about who are running the social media channel(s) (Waters et al., 2009). Finally, as argued by Tripathi & Verma (2018), NGOs that are transparent and hold themselves accountable towards the public, generally, experience increased support compared to those who do not.

### 2.1.2. Information dissemination

An additional aspect that contributes to the complexity of communicating online as an organization is the change in audience. When communicating offline, brands can target specific audiences in a, for example, location or culture-based way and tailor the communication to suit the preferences and needs of local or national audiences. In the online environment, however, the audience moves from smaller local or national groups into one global audience. While with online media, it is still possible to target people based on location to a certain extent (i.e. advertising using geo-targeting) as compared to mass communication like television, the general communication through posts on an NGOs Facebook page will be accessible to any user from any location (Thrall, Stecula & Sweet, 2014). Therefore, such an audience is automatically addressed in the exact same way despite the presence of many different spaces, cultures, and opinions due to the great diversity of consumers and stakeholders. The challenge for the brand is to find a unified but effective way to address this global audience.

Studies have shown how social media create new ways to share information, to approach and formulate issues, to inform the public and to increase awareness on a global level (Kietzmann et al., 2010; Thrall et al., 2014; Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). Combined efforts could also have significant effects on actions that are taken by influential people such as legal decision-makers or government officials. As all of these elements are crucial to an NGO's success, social media is regarded as an important tool in distributing information for them (Thrall et al., 2014). While acknowledging the opportunities that social media offers, Thrall et al. (2014) argue that it should also be recognized that the consumer's focus of attention is limited and divided. In other words, people are consuming a lot of content on social media on a daily basis and capturing and keeping their attention can be a challenge. This is where interactivity, engagement and relationship-building come into play. Increased ability to reach and create dialog with stakeholders of every kind leads to new options for information-sharing, mobilization, building relationships and trust, and engagement (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). The analysis of Facebook content will look at what type of content is posted and at the different ways in which information is disseminated by ENGOs. Analyzing effectiveness of the chosen social media strategies will not be a focus of this work.

### 2.1.3. Interactivity

In contemporary online communication processes, it is not simply the content of the message that matters, despite it being very important and the basis of communication. More focus is put on how something is communicated, in relation to 'what' is communicated. Additional importance is attributed to how the brand establishes relationships, interactivity and engagement. These factors also contribute to creating awareness and shaping organizational identity and image (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). In this sense, social media should be utilized as an asset to existing efforts of communication. According to Lovejoy & Saxton (2012), online interactions have become more present, multi-faceted, and crucial to the organization's success. Social media opens up communication and allows for dynamic two-way communication rather than just static one-way business-to-consumer communication. It is important to be informed about topics such as how stakeholders feel, what they want, what they expect, and questions that they might have. Based on such insights, NGOs can adjust their approach or make changes and adjustments where necessary. As Waters (2007) argues, interactivity and two-way communication are crucial to understanding stakeholders' wants and needs because it creates a space for interactivity and direct communication between different parties.

Nevertheless, business-to-consumer communication is a relevant starting point that provides the opportunity to move into two-way communication. This work will focus on one-way online business-to-consumer communication. It will not take into account the responses or consumer-to-business communication in general. Rather, it will look into the increased dynamic and interactive characteristics of online communication on a one-way basis and how this first stage of communication can foster interactivity.

Social media have countless functions to enhance and encourage interactivity, such as comment feeds, that the organization can utilize (Waters, 2007). This interactive element enhances public relations and is especially suited for organizations that are looking to convey a positive image and raise funds in an efficient and cost-effective way (Seo et al., 2009), therefore it is important that ENGOs introduce interactive elements and encourage interactivity. It is beyond the scope of this work to include a complete analysis of interactivity, including all forms of interactive communication that is taking place on the NGO Facebook pages (such as the comments section). As the focus of this work is how NGOs communicate towards their audience and in what way, the choice was made to solely focus on interactivity on that level.

One of the most important things about interactivity is that organizations have the right timing and insight. They are expected to know when the right time is to start or join a conversation and sense when they are trying too hard or their efforts become forced. People value organizations that seem authentic and truly care, that does not just spew information at them but that listen, engage, and respond (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Achieving interactivity can be done through, for instance, polls or interactive posts that invite a conversation or action. In this way, people can, for example, be motivated to think about something or a discussion can be created and, thereby, mobilize the audience (Guo & Saxton, 2014).

Facebook is a very suitable platform to foster interactivity. Kietzmann et al. (2011) refer to something that they created called the ‘honeycomb framework’ (p. 242). This framework aims to guide organizations in their communication endeavors. It identifies relationships, reputation, identity, presence and conversations as the most important purposes of Facebook communication. All of these functions are discussed either directly or indirectly to some extent within the segment of ‘interactivity’ as well as ‘engagement and relationship-building’. Engagement and relationship-building functions as a sort of extension to interactivity and will be discussed next.

#### 2.1.4. Engagement & Relationship-building

As organizations are increasingly spreading information through their social media pages, it should be recognized that simply having social media does not suffice. A strategical and effective approach is needed in order to make certain information stand out in the crowded online landscape. An essential tool for that is engagement and relationship-building, which are important to an organization's success in establishing their presence and influence (Yang & Saffer, 2018). Engagement and relationship-building can result in loyalty and long-lasting support. It entails the direct and dynamic communication between organizations and stakeholders. Social media have provided extended ways of engagement and relationship-building (Saxton & Waters, 2014). Three added functions that can be identified as ways to benefit involvement and engagement are "dynamic messaging capabilities, numerous interactive features, and formal social networks (Saxton & Waters, 2014, p. 280). Some concrete examples of how engagement and relationship-building are achieved are blogposts, liking something or following someone, responding to something or someone, having a conversation, and so forth (Yang & Saffer, 2018; Saxton & Waters, 2014).

According to Yang & Saffer (2018), it is important to focus on who contributes to creating engagement. While they argue stakeholders are vital in successful engagement, for this work, the emphasis lies on organizational communication towards stakeholders. Because of that, engagement here will entail the way in which organizations engage with their audience and how they foster and encourage engagement in their online communication, without taking into account the actual stakeholder-to-organization engagement that results from that.

Tripathi & Verma (2018) found that there are both personal and organizational factors that lead to increased engagement with NGOs and contribute to relationship-building. The personal motivators are emotions, trust, and need for information. The organizational motivators that they identified are accountability, performance, brand image, and transparency. For profit-focused businesses, engagement on social media contributes positively to a brand in various ways. Similarly, but in slightly altered ways, NGOs can also use social media interaction and engagement in advancing their mission. Another factor that can contribute to building relationships with volunteers and supporters in specific is to clearly voice acknowledgement and appreciation of their actions (Tripathi & Verma, 2018). In the analysis, engagement and relationship-building elements will be looked for in the original Facebook posts from the organizations, rather than analyzing the additional interactive two-way communication that is taking place. This will help understand the way in which, if at all,

NGOs encourage engagement and relationship-building throughout their own communication towards their audience.

NGOs should, thus, be highly focused on building relationships with stakeholders and to engage them to become involved in their organizations. Even more than for-profit organizations due to the nature of their organizations. Thus, relationship management is of vital importance (Pressgrove & McKeever, 2016). Gainer (2010) confirms that idea by stating that NGOs have a bigger focus on social value creation over profitability simply because their aim is to improve social, political, and environmental issues over the world rather than generating profit. A major aim is to convince people to side with them in terms of volunteering, donating, advocating their mission, and anything that helps them to achieve their goals. In doing so, loyalty is key (Pressgrove & McKeever, 2016) Both Pressgrove & McKeever and Gainer emphasize the importance of maintaining existing stakeholder relationships and to generate loyalty as long-lasting relationships are the most rewarding. Here the concepts of trust, accountability, brand image and performance as talked about by Tripathi & Verma come forward. This can be done by, for example, expressing gratitude and appreciation and highlighting the performance of the organization and the way they utilize donations and resources. Additionally, Tiago & Veríssimo (2014) found that engagement can also be helpful in generating more (online) word-of-mouth communication between consumers and stakeholders, as well as effectively creating 'buzz' around the topics that the organization wants to focus on. As Gainer (2010) emphasizes, communication, especially for NGOs, is a complex multi-party process rather than a one or two-way flow and all of these different parties need to be taken into consideration.

Jones (2017) argues that visual and textual communication is key to NGOs' work. He continues by discussing that the way in which NGOs present their content can increasingly be related to functioning as media organizations, referring to this more media-focused development as 'mediatisation'. This concept will be further discussed in relation to strategic communication later on in this framework. While parts of Jones' argument can be disregarded in this study's context, an interesting point that he makes is that new forms of communication lead to more varied and less predictable communication and content which could also help to spike curiosity and attention. It will be interesting to see if and how this becomes clear throughout the coding process and analysis.

What seems to be the most prevalent technique to engage consumers and stakeholders and to build valuable relationships with them is storytelling. It has gained a lot of credibility as an effective method over the years (Caprino, 2018). Engagement is seen by many as essential to successful communication and in moving people to take action. The article “Why storytelling is essential” (2018) also argues that research has proven that people learn, remember, and participate more when communication is engaging. As argued by Sorenson & Adkins (2019), the inclination to donate will increase the more people feel an emotional connection towards the cause and the organization that they would be donating to. According to Caprino (2018), connections formed through storytelling are stronger and more qualitative. Research has even suggested that personal feelings are valued more over facts by individuals. Consequently, decisions and behavior are mainly inspired by emotion over rationality. (Sorenson & Adkins, 2019).

The main suggestions that come forward when it comes to storytelling is to establish the problem in a powerful, attention-grabbing way. The essence is to tell a story with powerful visuals and emotional message. Eventually, it should focus on the solution and impact that can be made all while ensuring a personal connection by keeping the story relatable and accessible, making it easy to imagine for consumers (“11 storytelling strategies”, 2017 & “Why storytelling is essential”, 2018). Rather than simply taking in the given information, stories make it feel like more of an experience (“Why storytelling is essential”, 2018) It has been prevalent in human lives throughout history in the form of myths, legends, theater and so on. As Dudo & Kahlor (2016) describe:

Narratives have shaped cultural norms, reinforced beliefs, and conveyed social expectations across time and space. The relationship between narratives and public opinion can be traced back to the beginning of democracy, demonstrating the long-held belief that stories have the power to persuade audiences, influence publics, and shape democratic outcomes (p. 20).

Therefore, it seems like a natural development for stories to be present throughout social media communication as well. At the same time, this type of ‘corporate’ storytelling is established in a different way. It is done consciously with specific aims in mind and with careful consideration of what and how the story is told. Rather than personal storytelling, it is a deliberate choice that functions to advance the organization’s mission. If applied well, narrative messaging is a key successful element of engagement within strategic

communication (Siegel, 2016). Further reflecting on the findings of Siegel's work (2016), it reconfirms the various elements that have been highlighted here: storytelling as an effective technique for engagement, building relationships, increasing fundraising and awareness. Doing so with a focus on empathy through connections and emotion, trust through accountability and measuring performance, and shaping the brand image and public representation. One concern that is expressed is that NGOs might be hesitant about storytelling as they could be afraid of becoming too commercialized (Siegel, 2016). However, as NGOs are becoming more publicly visible, global and make their move towards social media, they have become more like commercialized media organizations already. Storytelling, in the case of NGOs, would seem to do the exact opposite: to allow them to maintain a human element and deliberately refocus their audience on their mission in a creative but effective way.

This work will take into account engagement and relationship-building from the organization's point of view. The analysis in the next chapter will, thus, look for the use of (elements of) storytelling and if and how it is applied by NGOs throughout their Facebook communication.

#### 2.1.5. Strategic alliances

A strategic alliance in the context of NGOs happens when an NGO starts a collaborative partnership with a governmental, for-profit organization or other party (Shumate & Oconnor, 2010). Such different organizations can complement each other through different ways of value creation and resources. The importance of strategic alliances have increased over the years (Dickinson & Barker, 2007). Dickinson & Barker (2007) emphasize how such partnerships have become more valuable for both parties rather than just a one-way sponsorship. Harrigan (2017) argues for strategic alliances as a way to contribute to competitive advantages for both parties as it is a way to become visible in new ways. Moreover, NGOs have developed an increased appreciation for cooperation over confrontation. Simultaneously, cooperations are expected to take part in the advancement of social causes and green initiatives, which they can achieve through such alliances (Stafford, Polonsky & Hartman, 2000). These cross-sector and inter-organizational relationships can be utilized to create more mobilization and generation of funds for NGOs. Other rewards entail increased and ongoing media attention, experiencing less opposition, and increasing loyalty. On the other hand, risks such as a discrepancy in shared values or perceived ingenuity are involved as well (Shumate & Oconnor, 2010). Therefore, strategic alliances can be related to

strategic communication in that the way in which an NGO communicates the alliance to the public will influence the risks and rewards that come with it. In other words, communication on strategic alliances can positively, and negatively, influence the pursuit of the social mission (Shumate & Oconnor, 2010).

When participating in strategic alliances it is, thus, important to consider the implications that come with them. Bouchery, Corbett, Fransoo, & Tan (2018) argue the complexity of NGO partnerships stemming from certain elements that are characteristic for NGOs such as limited resources, competition and uncertainty. Limited resources due to a non-profit focus and no steady, ensured income. Competition because there are a lot of different NGOs and other charitable organizations that compete for attention and support. Uncertainty because, again, there is no steady source of income and NGOs are reliable on support from others. Moreover, for-profit partners need to find a balance between their short-term investment and the aim of making improvements to a social cause in the long term. The results are far harder to measure than specific sales numbers of a product for example. Some examples of strategic alliance possibilities other than corporate alliances with a for-profit organization are celebrity or influencer collaborations (Jones, 2017) or a co-branding alliance, in which two similar brands/organizations unite to combine efforts and increase reach (Dickinson & Barker, 2007).

Dickinson & Baker (2007) elaborate more on risks in establishing a collaboration. They studied brand alliance evaluations and when these evaluations are negative from a consumer point of view, the results of the partnership will also often be negative. Due to these risks, it is highly important to carefully consider what strategic alliances would be helpful to the organization. Because, if done so, they can be beneficial for both the NGO and the other party involved. One of the criteria for a successful partnership is that the organizations are the right 'fit' for each other. This means that they match enough on elements such as social values or environmental vision to start a collaboration (Awad, 2019; George, 2014). Another important element is familiarity and previously existing brand attitudes. Working with parties that are already known to the NGO audience in a positive way can be helpful. This can generate spillover effects in which certain brand associations are transferred to the collaborating organization as well (Dickinson & Barker, 2007). This can of course also happen in both a negative and positive way. So, logically, it would not be a good decision for any environmental NGO (as the four organizations that were analyzed all are) to form a brand alliance with a company like Shell. This company has a bad reputation for harming the environment and does not match the ideas and aims of an ENGO. Thus, it would

be better to opt for a company that is more known for green initiatives.

In short, strategic alliances, when done in the right way, can positively affect people's knowledge and awareness about an NGO and their aims while fostering trust, loyalty and positive views of the organization. While it is not the focus of this work to determine how effective strategic alliances are, it will look at whether stakeholders are made aware of alliance to generate the positive effects this can create. In other words, it will not focus on the details of how NGOs collaborate and create alliances. Rather, the focus will be on if and how NGOs communicate partnerships, collaborations and strategic alliances to their Facebook audience.

#### 2.1.6. Advocacy

The final element that will be discussed is advocacy, which is essential to NGOs and ties in with strategic communication (Andrews & Edwards, 2004; Ciszek, 2017; Yang & Saffer, 2018). Ciszek (2017), emphasizes the importance of public relations and activism to strategic communication in bringing about social change. She seems to define the notion of advocacy as a combination of these two concepts. Andrews & Edwards (2004), provide a slightly different and clearly formulated definition of advocacy. They define it as aiming to influence decisions and changes on a societal and political level that benefits public interest. According to Ciszek (2017), NGOs can be seen as activists and strategic communicators who, through advocacy, can change and shape the course of a social movement or cause by employing a certain narrative, imagery, and rhetorical framework. Additionally, she discusses the importance of gathering resources and obtaining influential allies to overcome political and institutional obstacles. While her focus on public relations and activism makes sense to a certain extent, advocacy seems to be a bit more complex. As argued by Yang & Saffer (2018), having an influence on a societal and institutional level is closely tied to public discourse. Next to resources and international allies, which were also mentioned by Ciszek (2017), their study highlights the importance of information transmission, network positions, and engagement to being successful. Information transmission revolves around effectively spreading organizational messages and to inform about their agenda. Additionally, network and engagement are influential in gaining visibility in the public sphere, within which issues are discussed and negotiated by the different parties involved, such as citizens, journalists and politicians (Yang & Saffer, 2018). According to Betsill & Corell (2001), NGOs ideally attempt to shape and influence the process of policymaking and governmental decisions. Some research argues that NGOs have had very differing levels of influence or even limited

influence on policy despite efforts (Dür & Bièvre, 2007). Betsill & Corell (2001) nevertheless argue that through the power of money, knowledge and information NGOs can exert impact. While the former resource mainly applies to big, successful NGOs, knowledge and information is a more accessible resource to other NGOs as well. Effectively sharing this knowledge and information in order to foster strong advocacy seems key then.

Taking all of these different arguments into account, it seems that advocacy is essentially realized through the appliance of a combination of the different strategic communication categories discussed so far: Disclosure, transparency & openness, information dissemination, interactivity, engagement & relationship-building, and strategic alliances. As such, advocacy can be taken as an overarching theme in ENGOs' strategic communication.

As briefly touched upon earlier, an argument made by Jones (2017) that adds to the idea of advocacy in NGO context is that NGOs have been or are going through a process of 'mediatisation' and they have become more like media organizations. In practice, this means that they start working with or like other existing mediums (Jones, 2017). This concept of mediatisation can be linked to the organizations' communication strategy as well as the topic of advocacy. As Jones argues, NGOs are changing the way they work and are shifting from a more internal approach focused on the mission and concrete results, towards a more media-like approach in which the emphasis lies more on advocacy, influence, and how they present their organization. The 'mediatisation' development could affect the way in which such organizations present certain notions and initiatives. In this case, the focus does not only shift from a more internal emphasis on effectiveness and results towards media representation, advocacy, and partnerships. It also means that policies and the direct way of working might be changed to make it fit more into a media context. Such a development would have an impact on NGOs position in the public sphere which, as established before, is important to advocacy.

Jones even argues that the process of mediatisation means that organizations are almost 'forced' and limited to shape themselves into something that is "suitable for media representation" (Jones, 2017, p. 177) He elaborates on that by stating: "The use of media, or what works in media terms – an image, a relationship, a story – shapes and frames political processes and public discourse" (p. 177). In this sense, NGOs are both becoming more like media organizations themselves while also being restricted by the norms of this 'media'.

At the same time, 'mediatisation' can be considered as a conscious and strategic choice to make their communication more effective and appealing. Whether the process of mediatisation as described by Jones is actually happening to that extent in reality can be questioned. Although the power of media should certainly be acknowledged rather than underestimated, it is not necessarily as limiting as Jones makes it out to be. Especially in the case of NGOs, who have no product to sell but simply their message to convey, one could also believe that the media provides opportunities that can be utilized to the NGO's benefit, but it does not have to limit them. It makes sense, however, that NGOs would utilize and mimic the media when one considers the transformative and influential nature of the media in the context of society. In influencing public opinion, getting the attention of the public is essential. It helps to bring awareness to issues and solutions, allows for fundraising, recruitment and generating other important assets, and increases the chance for successful social change (Yang & Saffer, 2018). It is also discussed how the media plays a large role in shaping public discourse and prioritizing certain issues or topics over others. This, in turn, affects the way that issues, and their severity or significance, are perceived by the public. Research has shown that strategic communication can help contribute to building or influencing the media's agenda (Yang & Saffer). As a result, advocacy, strategic communication and mediatization are interrelated in an NGO context. Because media coverage plays such an important role, it can be argued that the process of mediatisation can be beneficial to advocacy goals. NGOs should aim to establish their presence in the public sphere and by partaking in strategic communication and 'mediatisation' they can help to set the media's agenda and positively affect advocacy targets (Yanger & Saffer). Carrying out the analysis of Facebook communication by NGOs will hopefully provide more insights into these statements and if and how this shift to media-like communication plays out in practice.

### 3. Methodology

As stated in the introduction, the research question is: “*How do ENGOs apply strategic communication on Facebook to inform about, engage on and advocate on issues regarding the environment?*” The sub-questions that were formulated to answer this main question are (1) What type of content is presented on ENGOs’ Facebook pages? (2) How do ENGOs present information in their Facebook posts (3) How is the element of advocacy included in the organizations’ Facebook posts? and (4) How do the organizations invite and invoke engagement through their Facebook posts?

The following chapter will provide a detailed description of the research design of this study which will be used to answer the questions listed above. It will describe the research method that will be used, the sample that will be applied in collecting the data, explain the procedure of the data analysis, briefly introduce the organizations that will be studied, and highlight the relevance and reasoning behind the choices that were made.

#### 3.1. Research Design

The qualitative approach was chosen to answer the research question, because this work wants to research what specific strategies as well as textual and visual content ENGOs use in their Facebook communication to address their audience. The purpose is not to count how many times particular topics are mentioned or said but to gain concrete insights into strategies and decisions. It is interested in the specific topics and ideas that are communicated on their Facebook pages and the way in which this is done through engagement, disclosure, and other strategies. Thus, for this research, it is not relevant to take specific words or sentences as coding units and to count them, as one would do for quantitative content analysis. Rather, it wants to infer themes and meanings from the overall communication through Facebook posts, which entails coding bigger pieces of text and visuals in a qualitative way. In this way, qualitative content analysis moves beyond the limitations of quantitative research by taking into account context as well as semantics and underlying meanings (Wildemuth, 2016). As Berg (2001) also emphasizes, quantitative research relates to measuring things while qualitative research focuses on meaning-making of things, which is what this study aims to do. Rather than statistically analyzing ENGO Facebook communication on a quantitative level, this study will focus on analyzing the specific Facebook posts’ content in a qualitative way. It will look at what type of content is presented and how it is communicated by the ENGOs. Social media and communication on it have become much more popular over the years and, therefore, it has become increasingly

important to organizations in addressing consumers and other stakeholders (Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011). In addition to quantitative studies, a qualitative analysis can help benefit deeper understanding of organizational Facebook use and ways to approach it. Furthermore, qualitative research focuses on interpretation and the understanding of concepts, experiences and relationships. In analyzing data qualitatively, the researcher attempts to extract meaningful relationships and/or patterns (Brennen, 2017). This work applies said research method and in doing so, aims to find patterns and relevant relations in ENGOs Facebook communications and branding.

In qualitative research, it is acknowledged that reality is socially constructed and, additionally communication is recognized as a “social and cultural practice” (Brennen, p. 6, 2017), meaning that the role of the researcher is more present throughout the research. Moreover, it provides a different way to analyze and interpret data that would traditionally be analyzed in a quantitative way. This can provide different and additional insights that are valuable to further research and practice. To summarize, qualitative research focuses on interpretation and understanding in a rather subjective, critical way with a focus on information and analysis rather than on predicting and measuring data in an objective way, as is done in quantitative research.

### 3.1.1. Qualitative content analysis approach

For this study, a qualitative content analysis of social media posts will be carried out. Qualitative content analysis is a suitable method for “analyzing written, verbal or visual communication messages” (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p. 107), which is exactly what this study aims to do. It has been used for a long time within many different fields, including communication and sociology. This method contributes to obtaining new knowledge and understanding of certain data, contexts, and can help inform future practices. It does not just count results but aims to interpret the underlying meaning of communication processes. Thus, rather than focus on numbers and statistics, it focuses on interpretation, meaning making, and the purpose behind things (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

This study takes an approach that is both inductive and deductive. As Wildemuth (2016) explains, qualitative research tends to be inductive in contrast to quantitative research which tends to be deductive. The deductive approach is meant to test hypotheses or focuses on questions, ideas or assumptions based on previous theory and research. The inductive approach, on the other hand, moves from raw data to ideas, concepts and theory. In other words, it does not have prior theory or research as a starting point, but rather focuses on the

data to infer themes, knowledge, and possibly even creates new theories (Wildemuth, 2016).

This research has a combined approach with elements from both an inductive and, to some extent, a deductive approach. There are no direct hypotheses that will be tested but there are, however, a number of sub-questions that were formulated based on existing theory. Therefore, the research is based on a theoretical framework that introduces certain pre-existing key concepts. This provides some expected outcomes of the analysis. At the same time, the aim is also not to develop an entirely new theory. Rather, it attempts to provide new theoretical and practical insights based on the analysis that will be carried out (Hodkinson, 2008). The open coding of the data was done before finishing the theoretical framework. The research is inductive then in the sense that it codes raw data objectively, rather than inspired by a predefined theoretical framework. Later on, these open codes have been clustered into thematic groups or categories (by means of axial and selective codes). As Wildemuth (2016) argues, qualitative research does not have to be fully inductive, which applies to this study. It is deductive in that the phase of axial and selective coding, following the unbiased open coding, was guided and inspired by the theoretical framework and the elements of strategic communication that came forward in it.

Hsieh & Shannon (2005) introduce three different approaches of qualitative content analysis that are also referred to by Wildemuth in relation to inductive and deductive approaches (2016). This work applies a combination of two of these approaches, namely (1) conventional qualitative content analysis and (2) directed content analysis. Here, the first one has an inductive approach whereas the latter has a deductive one. For conventional qualitative content analysis, the following description is provided by Hsieh & Shannon (2005):

This type of design is usually appropriate when existing theory or research literature on a phenomenon is limited. Researchers avoid using preconceived categories, instead allowing the categories and names for categories to flow from the data. Researchers immerse themselves in the data to allow new insights to emerge (p. 1279)

This description partially fits the research carried out here. It is true that existing theory is limited on this specific topic. Furthermore, for the open coding stage, preconceived ideas, perspectives and categories were avoided. There was a full focus on the raw data in order to allow for unbiased codes to come forward, which adheres to the idea of the generated knowledge being “grounded in the actual data” (p. 1280).

By contrast, as mentioned previously, the axial and especially the selective coding stage were directed and guided more by the theoretical framework. This can be related to the description Hsieh & Shannon (2005) provide for the direct approach:

Sometimes, existing theory or prior research exists about a phenomenon that is incomplete or would benefit from further description. The goal of a directed approach to content analysis is to validate or extend conceptually a theoretical framework or theory. Existing theory or research can help focus the research question. It can provide predictions about the variables of interest or about the relationships among variables (p. 1281).

Therefore, the analysis and discussion of findings will be guided by the sub-questions that were stated earlier and that were formulated based on the theoretical framework. Because this deductive approach is more biased and inclined to support the previously established theory, the combination with an inductive approach is most effective. It provides a balance between looking for new ideas and theory as well as confirming existing ideas and theory. Thus, while the selective codes that resulted from the coding process were inspired by the theory, the discussion of findings will attempt to not only confirm but also contradict, reflect on, enrich and extend the existing theory (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

### 3.1.2. Sample

The platform that will be focused on is Facebook. Facebook was chosen as a platform because it provides a variety of tools to communicate and engage with the public, both visual and textual and with the potential to be highly interactive (Cho, Schweickart & Haasec, 2014). Facebook content from four different ENGOs will be analyzed, which are:

(1) Greenpeace International. Facebook-page name: @greenpeace.international (2.9 million Facebook likes). This page is an international page with a global focus.

(2) The National Wildlife Federation. Facebook-page name: @NationalWildlife (1.1 million Facebook likes). This page is a national page with a focus on the United States.

(3) Friends of the Earth. Facebook-page name: @friendsoftheearth (233.000 Facebook likes). This page is a national page with a focus on the United Kingdom.

(4) Earthwatch. Facebook-page name: @Earthwatch (53.000 Facebook likes). This page is an international page with a global focus.

The number of likes for each organization was extracted on March 22, 2019 and are subject to change over time. The language used for all four organization's Facebook pages is English. The selection consists of four NGOs, that are all non-profit and aim to contribute to improving environmental issues. The choice was made to focus on two organizations with a global focus and two organizations with a national/local focus. Additionally, two of the organizations have a bigger reach on Facebook with over a million users liking their page and the other two organizations have a small reach with under 250.000 users liking their page. This variation in focus and reach of organizations was chosen as it might show a possibly significant difference in communication use. Here, the goal is to find out to what extent the NGOs are applying strategic communication while using Facebook to advance their organization's mission. To do so, 150 Facebook posts will be analyzed per organization, adding up to a total of 600 posts. This will allow for an analysis of the communication that is taking place online and the strategies that are seemingly being applied. The time-period that will be researched is the contemporary one as the focus is on how ENGOS navigate within the current social media environment. References to past practices might be made for informational and comparison purposes but the methods and data gathering will focus on the current situation. Therefore, the 150 most recent Facebook posts from each organization, at the time of data collection, will be taken for analysis, resulting in a total of 600 Facebook posts to be analyzed. All of the posts were collected and screenshotted between April 30, 2019 and May 2, 2019.

If a post can be classified as unrelated to environmental issues it will be disregarded, and the next most recent post will be selected. For all the selected posts, all 150 screenshots from one organization's page will always be taken on the same day to ensure consistency and to reflect the engagement with the post (i.e. number of likes, comments, and shares) in the most accurate way. While this research has a qualitative focus, the number of likes, comments and shares can still be used to reflect upon the effectiveness of a post and its capability to foster engagement and interactivity.

Below, a brief description of each of the organizations can be found to provide insights into the kind of organization they are and their aims.

### *Organization 1: Greenpeace International*

Greenpeace is an environmental NGO that is focused on improving and addressing a variety of aspects involved with earth and the environment such as: deforestation, oil use, plastic pollution, and more. The organization aims to function as an organization that takes action in a peaceful way and thereby provides a voice to the earth. They have faced some criticism for taking a controversial approach for certain campaigns as well. Greenpeace does not accept funding from any entity with possible mixed interests such as governments or corporations. This means that they are free from being influenced by big donors, but it also creates the need of successfully addressing the public to contribute to the continuing existence of the organization. While Greenpeace also has local branches, the one that was chosen for this study is Greenpeace International so this specific Facebook-page has a worldwide focus (<https://www.greenpeace.org/international/>).

### *Organization 2: The National Wildlife Federation*

The National Wildlife Federation (NWF) mainly focuses on the preservation, protection and conservation of nature and wildlife side of environmentalism. Their focus is on aspects such as habitat protection, population conservation and addressing climate change effects. It has a national focus on America, rather than an international focus. This nationalism comes forward in their mission plan and their wish to connect with Americans in emphasizing wildlife importance now and in the future. They want to work towards achieving their goals through turning facts and science into a way of formulating priorities and creating obtainable, successful solutions. Interestingly, where Greenpeace prides itself on and emphasizes its independence, The NWF does the same for their collaborations with other corporations, which could possibly affect their social media dynamics (<https://www.nwf.org/>).

### *Organization 3: Friends of the Earth*

Friends of the Earth (FoIE) focuses on addressing environmental and social issues around the world. Through challenging existing systems and providing feasible solutions they hope to change and better the world in a just and sustainable way. This entails campaigns to, for example, prevent depletion of natural resources and encouraging sustainability initiatives. Their organization also focuses on other goals such as the rights of indigenous people. Still, their other missions often go hand in hand with environmentalism. They also describe

themselves as a democratic grassroots organization, in which everyone gets a say in the decision-making process. They do not have any collaborations with big corporations but strengthen their organization through alliances with groups such as farmers' movements and human rights groups. This organization also has local and international branches. The one that was chosen for this study is the Facebook-page related to the United Kingdom branch (<https://www.foei.org/>).

#### *Organization 4: Earthwatch*

Earthwatch is an organization focused on raising awareness about environmental issues and working towards solving those problems. This is done by conducting research and taking action on issues like ocean health, climate change and ecosystems. They focus on engaging and educating people, enabling research, and coming up with workable solutions. The organization works together with a variety of partners such as scientists, specific communities, as well as for-profit and non-profit organizations in achieving their goal. Besides that, they are a global organization that operates on regional, national and international levels. Earthwatch mentions inclusiveness, objectivity, passion, empowerment and responsibility as their core values. The organization has local branches as well but this the focus will be on the international branch of the organization (<https://earthwatch.org/>).

#### 3.1.3. Procedure

The collection of data will be carried out in full by the author of this work. After collecting the posts, the analysis will look for the previously discussed elements of strategic communication: disclosure, transparency & openness, information dissemination, interactivity, engagement & advocacy, and strategic alliances. Both visual elements and captions included in the Facebook posts will be considered in the analysis. For clarity, an image has been included below to indicate what will be considered as 'a post'. The parts that will be considered for the analysis have been marked with a green box. The first aspect is the caption, another is the visual or graphic included in the post.

In some posts, like in this example, an external source or article might be referenced or included. Other posts can consist of only text and visuals produced by the ENGO itself. In both cases, all of the text, visuals and graphics will be taken into account, whether it came from the ENGO or from an



outside source. In this case, therefore, the visual is included in the coding process and the final post element is the title of the 'The Guardian' article that Greenpeace links and refers to in the post.

The number of likes, comments and shares will not be considered in the coding process. The focus is on analyzing Facebook communication by the organizations themselves. It is beyond the scope of this work to incorporate engagement with consumers and to thus analyze the comment section and additional elements as well.

#### 3.1.4. Data Analysis

To analyse the collected data, a coding framework of open, axial, and selective codes will be applied. When trying to make meaning of raw data, an approach to analyse these data needs to be established. To help in meaning-making and interpretation of the data, it needs to be coded first (Blair, 2015). As this research is explorative, it takes an approach of open, axial, and selective coding in which the codes are established based on the data rather than pre-established. This allows for a more inductive approach to the data (Blair, 2015).

In the beginning stage of the research, the data will be labeled according to certain themes and topics that come forward in every individual post. These will later be categorized according to specified themes. The phase of open coding will be performed before finishing the theoretical framework to this work, in order to go into the coding process with openness and to guarantee unbiased and objective results as much as possible in this initial coding stage. Performing the open coding after completing the theoretical framework will make the coding process guided and pre-focused, which is not desired when attempting to have a first look at the data with an open and clear mind. Next, axial coding will be carried out. Here, connections between categories will be made and meaning/interpretations will be given to the data. Lastly, selective coding will provide one or more core categories and the analysis/coding findings will be related back and linked to the theory (Boeije, 2010). This will then lead to the final overarching findings.

To carry out the analysis and interpretation of the data, the program Atlas.ti will be used. This is a program that is very suited for analyzing a large dataset in a qualitative way. The dataset will be uploaded into the program and codes can be ascribed to them in a clear way. It allows for a structured way of processing the dataset, and it will make it easier to discover patterns among the large number of different posts and avoid....

### 3.2. Coding Process

The coding process consisted of the analysis of 600 Facebook posts. The coding resulted in 809 open codes, 46 axial codes, and 5 selective codes. Below is a small view of sample coding. The full coding tree including open codes has been included as Appendix A as it is too big to include in its entirety here. It includes all open, axial, and selective codes as well as the number of times that the open codes occurred.

#### Sample coding

Here one of the selected Facebook posts is shown along with the codes that were ascribed to it. The use of a hashtag is included as a relevant element because it helps draw attention to the topic of the post and allows the audience to further explore by clicking it. Further, it shows how the post tells the audience how they can help and provides suggestions for personal improvements. The picture is also coded as it is portraying the issue that is talked about and adds to the message. The post also addresses the audience in an informal/personal way. Tone can, therefore, also contribute to how something is communicated. Lastly, the post shares information by referring to an external source/informative article.



### 3.3. Operationalization

To conduct the analysis, the meaning of different variables and the way in which they will be measured need to be defined (Babbie, 2018). The following operational definitions will help in understanding the way in which the analysis was carried out.

Disclosure, transparency & openness is related to honest communication and accessibility of information. It will be measured in terms of data provision, background

information, and so forth.

Information dissemination is defined as the way in which audiences are informed and what kind of information is spread to them. This is focused on through the type of content that is presented as well as what type of information is highlighted in these posts. An example would be a focus on achievements made by the organization.

Interactivity is a relatively straightforward concept as its presence is recognized through interactive elements of a post. Interactivity here does not mean two-way interactions but rather the concrete characteristics of a post that invite interactivity. In this sense, elements such as an in-post activity or starting a conversation with the audience will be seen as signaling interactivity

Engagement & relationship-building are defined as the ways in which the attention of the audience is increased and the way in which they get encouraged to become mobilized. Examples of elements that contribute to this are personal links and storytelling, engaging questions, and events and other means to get the audience to become more involved.

Strategic alliances are defined as any type of alliance or partnership that is established to benefit the ENGO's goal. It will be measured by references to such alliances and the way in which these alliances are communicated. Meaning, how are they working together or is there additional information on the alliance partner,

Advocacy is defined as an overarching element that results from a combination of the previously mentioned elements. It is focused on affecting public discourse and policymaking. As such, concrete communication on advocacy is characterized through impacting social change, influencing the government, and elements of mediatization.

### 3.4. Validity and Reliability

Although the guidelines for establishing the quality of quantitative research are quite clear, different rules apply for qualitative research (Babbie, 2018). There is no consensus among scholars about the relevance of validity and reliability in qualitative research. While some argue these concepts are irrelevant to qualitative studies, others have argued for its importance but in altered ways. Some argue that it is about measures and therefore only relevant to quantitative research. Others argue that, in qualitative research, without reliability there is no validity, which would mean proving validity will establish both concepts (Golafshani, 2003).

Both Babbie (2018) and Golafshani (2003), however, recognize the importance of measuring some type of validity and they suggest the idea of quality and trustworthiness.

Babbie (2018) offers a way to take into account the concepts' importance in relation to qualitative studies. Here, validity is defined as "the question of whether you are measuring what you say you are measuring" (Babbie, 2018, p. 417). As Babbie (2018) explains, it is not possible to concretely measure concepts in qualitative research. Rather, most of these concepts are constructs based on previous research and general agreements. Due to this nature, the researcher's position and perspective will affect interpretations and achieving full objectivity is difficult.

Reliability, in turn, is defined as "a question of whether a measurement or observational technique would yield the same data if it were possible to measure or observe the same thing several times independently" (Babbie, 2018, p. 418). At the same time, however, he acknowledges that the concept is much less measurable and clear, as the concepts studied are constructs that can change and the method is more interpretative. Due to this subjectivity, to a certain extent, qualitative results cannot be replicated in an identical way. However, a clear description and explanation on how the research and interpretations were done can help establish a level of credibility, neutrality and consistency (Golafshani, 2003). It should be the case that similar studies should be able to come up with similar results. Lastly, a qualitative study with good 'quality' helps to create understanding of something that was unclear at first, in contrast to quantitative research that has the aim of explaining something (Golafshani, 2003).

In this study, validity and reliability are established by taking into account the operational definitions of the variables. In doing so, it can be understood why certain elements are attributed to a specific strategic communication element. By working with such definitions as well as considering the established theoretical framework, the study attempts to increase neutrality and credibility despite the subjective nature of qualitative research. While it may be difficult to replicate the study, it is credible that similar results can be achieved. In carrying out the analysis and applying the concepts discussed in the operationalization, the study has generated understanding of raw data in the context of strategic communication. These elements overall contribute to the quality of the research and thereby validate it and make it reliable to the extent that reliability can be established in qualitative research.

## 4. Analysis and Findings

The concept of strategic communication has previously been defined in this work as involving six key elements: (1) Disclosure, transparency and openness, (2) Information dissemination, (3) Interactivity, (4) Engagement and relationship-building, (5) Strategic alliances, and (6) Advocacy. In the final stage of the coding process, it was decided to use these elements as the selective codes and to group the axial codes according to them. It seemed fitting to do so as the coding results allowed for a categorization that aligned with the strategic communication framework. Advocacy was recognized as an overarching theme to the prior five elements and has therefore not been used as a selective code. In discussing the analysis and findings, this next part will be structured according to the sub-questions introduced at the beginning of this work: (1) What type of content is presented on ENGOs' Facebook pages, (2) How do ENGOs present information in their Facebook posts, (3) How is the element of advocacy included in the organizations' Facebook posts, and (4) How do the organizations invite and invoke engagement through their Facebook posts? Structuring the findings guided by the sub-questions rather than by the selective codes allows for ideas and findings beyond the strategic communication framework to be explored. This discussion will lead to a conclusion in which the main research question will be answered: *How do ENGOs apply strategic communication on Facebook to inform about, engage on and advocate on issues regarding the environment?*

### 4.1. Type of Content

This section will answer the first sub-question that has been formulated at the beginning of this work: *What type of content is presented on ENGOs' Facebook pages?* In exploring the ways in which strategic communication is or is not applied by ENGOs on Facebook, a starting point is to first focus on the type of content that is presented in general. Coding the selected data, it became clear that a large majority of the posts include some type of visual content such as an image or a video. 449 out of 600 posts fall within the axial coding category of 'Visuals, art or media product'. When a post included an element other than text or a link, it was put into this category. This entailed images, videos, cartoons, graphs, (short) films/documentaries, art creations and a song. Such a variety in types of posts was present in every ENGO's Facebook communication as none of them used merely textual material to communicate. In terms of the topics of content, an interesting finding is that the number of posts referring to topics that one would expect to be quite important to ENGOs, such as fundraising and asking for donations, were quite limited. At the same time, things that

are seemingly more ‘trivial’ to an ENGO were much more prevalent, such as celebrating a special day or voicing appreciation for contributions made by a variety of people and parties. This suggests that a direct, straightforward approach might not be the most effective way of approaching an issue but that strategic ways of approaching communication are needed. Later sections of this analysis will discuss why these decisions might be made and how it contributes to strategic communication.

As NGOs heavily rely on spreading information in realizing their goals, with knowledge and information forming a big part of their ability to exert power (Betsill & Corell, 2001), it is not surprising that an informing type of content is present in a big part of Facebook communication. Most of the posts refer to either an informative (newspaper) article or other external source (or both) as a way to provide more information. Regularly, such posts also refer to a petition that people can sign while also offering information about that petition. Another type of content that is used is the sharing of other pages’ content or posts in addition to personal original content. This allows the audience to also become aware of a wider selection of content, beyond the posts that the ENGOs produce on their own. The next section will discuss the presentation of information in more detail. Lastly, not only is Facebook used a lot to spread information, another big purpose seems to be to promote things such as products or content as well as events, expeditions and other activities. To sum up, almost all of the analyzed content consisted of a textual caption combined with some type of visual product or external link, post, or article.

#### 4.2. Presenting Information

Having established what kind of content is presented, the discussion will move to how this content is communicated and the implications of that. This section will answer the second sub-question: *How do ENGOs present information in their Facebook posts?* As highlighted before, a majority of the posts consist of both a textual caption and an additional element, through which the organizations often offer information to their audience. The first part of information presentation happens in the posts themselves. Sometimes the caption contains informative elements, mentions interesting/unexpected facts or highlights research findings, amongst other things. Furthermore, a lot of posts contain buttons that indicate a possibility to become more informed such as an information icon or an ‘about this website’ button. Such buttons then link the audience further to a website or informative article that allows them to deepen their knowledge. The organizations used a variety of ways to keep the audience informed and it showed that they attach a lot of value to informing their audience.

Not only did they do so through ways such as providing updates and promising future updates, but they also encourage them to stay informed and increased awareness on a lot of topics.

Knowledge and information also are not always presented in a straightforward, factual way. Rather, more creative ways of informing are applied as well. All organizations regularly publish posts that are celebrating or highlighting a special day or time, such as Earth Day or April fool's Day. The first one is an example of an environmental-related special day that specifically aligns with ENGOs goals. By mentioning its occurrence, the audience is immediately informed of its existence and perhaps inclined to become more informed about it. The latter, April Fool's Day, is an ENGO-unrelated mainstream commercial celebration. However, in such cases, the organizations tend to highlight the day's occurrence, refer to its celebration, and then somehow link it to their organization's mission. An example of that is post #525 by the National Wildlife Federation, in which they lightheartedly highlight Valentine's Day. Then, they continue by linking it to their organization by talking about how the concept of love is of importance to wildlife too and they reference an external article.

Some of the information that is presented in the content is quite clear and to the point. There are some posts that contain direct communication about the organization itself. Such posts mainly inform about organizational targets, organizational contributions or achievements, and new or ongoing campaigns. They also occasionally celebrate the organization by, for example, celebrating their anniversary or highlighting awards that they received. This type of communication is mostly grounded in the post itself, and therefore, coming from the organization itself. Additionally, there are also numerous posts that refer to other sources, outside of their own Facebook page. As stated before, many posts contain some type of link that takes the audience beyond the Facebook post. Examples are a reference to their own website, to a petition or to an informative (newspaper) article. Often, a post contains a reference to another person or organization or highlights an affiliation with one. This analysis will go into more detail about strategic alliances later on. Yet, it is still important to note that referencing others is also a way of informing, as the audience is made aware of another party and their involvement. Most of the time, in case of such a reference, a link to the corresponding Facebook page or website is included as well.

The informative posts and articles that they link to often focus on referencing and/or explaining a problem or issue. While not the most 'fun' way of communicating, stating specific bad examples, voicing frustrations and concerns, being critical about someone or

something, and focusing on the negative still needs to be part of the communication. ENGOS exist to fix problems and in order to do so, these need to be effectively and clearly addressed. However, there seems to be quite a good balance when it comes to focusing on negative things and focusing on positive things. Because, while often focusing on a problem or issue, the number of posts that focus on the positive, stating specific good examples, highlighting achievements, and providing solutions and suggestions towards solving those problems are just as high. These types of positive informative posts are important in creating and maintaining hope and the belief that change is possible. If everything seems to be focusing on what is still wrong and still needs to be changed, it may foster the feeling of the world being ‘broken beyond repair’ rather than encouraging people. Informing people about efforts made by various parties, and cases in which the situation or problem is improving or solved is, therefore, highly important as well (Laufer, Silvera, McBride & Schertzer, 2010). Noteworthy, the organizations also focused on political or legal developments. Mentioning government officials, bills, regulations, and other government or law-related topics emphasized their level of seriousness and further informs the audience about environmental issues and what can be done about them on a higher level.

Lastly, as an extension of information-sharing, the idea of increased honesty, trustworthiness and credibility also comes into play. In order to get stakeholders to listen to a certain message, it is important that they have the feeling that the information and message is honest (Voeth & Herbst, 2008). Here, it was observed that the organizations have different ways to create a sense of disclosure, openness & transparency and, thereby, a certain level of trust. Honesty was shown by admitting mistakes, correcting wrongful information, and being honest about not having certain knowledge, rather than pretending in order to advance the message or goal. Credibility and trustworthiness were created through the presentation of data, verifying effectiveness of certain techniques, expert input, and more. Even relatively simple things such as voicing frustrations could then possibly contribute to the believability of the organization as it shows they are not afraid to show true opinion. An example of that was when some ENGOS highlighted unfairness or talked about ‘weaker’ or poorer groups being disadvantaged the most. This focus on specific communities or citizen groups shows how the organization is with them, rather than siding with an elite or aiming for self-benefit. They dare to speak out and are unafraid of the response, emphasizing their authenticity and determination.

The next section on engagement will deepen the discussion on information-sharing and look into how the organizations attempt to mobilize people after informing them.

### 4.3. Inviting and invoking engagement

Having discussed the element of information dissemination, the focus shifts to the strategy of engagement: *How do the organizations invite and invoke engagement through their Facebook posts?* While information dissemination is an important and key part to the success of ENGOs, it does not end there. Information is the starting point and after sharing it, the audience needs to be encouraged to take in this information and turn it into action. This is where engaging the audience comes into play. Again, a lot of different strategies have come forward from the coding process.

As it has been established that there were different types of content to share information, the element of ‘visuals, art or media product’ also relates to engagement. A plain text is much less appealing to an audience than visual content is. Combining different elements with text and ensuring that the posts vary in the way they are presented, will keep people alert and more likely to focus on what is posted (Jones, 2017). Examples of other attention-grabbing elements that were found are the use of outstanding emojis (such as a glaring siren) or headings such as ‘BREAKING NEWS’. With the overflow of content that people consume on a daily basis, it is easy to scroll past a basic text post. Including additional elements increases the chance that someone lingers and pays attention (Jones, 2017) In addition to this, the organizations sometimes try to make the text as interesting as possible. A lot of catchphrases were used in their communication such as “Chance for Change” and “No Forests, No Life” and other motivational statements. Another similar strategy is the use of hashtags. Not only is this a short and clear way to introduce what the post is about, people can also click the hashtag to explore other posts and comments about it or even start using it themselves.

Previously, it was discussed how a positive and negative focus are needed and used interchangeably to inform people. In engaging people, the most-used approach seems to be a positive and fun way of communicating. This entails a focus on humor and funny posts containing elements such as jokes or sarcasm while often maintaining an enthusiastic tone. This element of entertainment will help to capture people’s attention while still getting across a message. If this is not done in an appealing way, many people will not linger to watch an included video or will not be motivated to click the link, article, etc. (Crawford, 2009). A problematic occurrence that was found in the analysis was that the organization Friends of the

Earth posted extremely long text posts on more than one occasion. Such posts are exemplary of content that will quickly tend to lose the audience's attention in an abundance of content (Crawford, 2009). Thus, it is important how something is communicated in the post itself. At the same time, a more negative approach with a focus on the seriousness of certain situations can still be helpful in fostering engagement as well. Confrontation can be effective in attracting attention and bringing about change too, as it is a way of attracting attention through standing out as well (Crawford, 2009). Both raising awareness and providing solutions and suggestions can turn such a negative focus around towards a hopeful, activating approach.

Encouraging and engaging the audience in general was done in many ways. An important way, used by many types of brands, is to give incentives such as giveaways. What was noticed a lot in the ENGOS' posts were engaging questions such as 'Do you agree?' or provided something that functioned as food for thought. Other encouraging phrases linked to becoming more involved or informed were included a lot, such as 'Join the journey!', 'Learn more', and 'See more here'. Another interactive way of engaging people and to interact with them to a certain extent is to voice appreciation or gratefulness or to voice support. Showing the audience that helping out leads to appreciation and public praise could have an encouraging effect. Directly addressing people can also be effective, as it could appeal to their conscience and function as a realization moment that they can make a difference as a normal citizen. Statements such as 'Everyone can help' can provide the feeling of having an easy 'entry-level' for any kind of person. An extension of this is discussion personal experience and personal stories in a post. Showing how one person or 'real' individuals made a difference and making an appeal to people's emotions can have a mobilizing effect too as was established in the discussion of storytelling. General stories are much less appealing to an audience than ones with a personal link or that they can relate to. Linking to this as well, are the posts with a focus on community and unity. The organizations tend to emphasize that people are strong and even stronger together. Additionally, there are quite a number of posts that focus on one generation in specific. Mostly, the younger generation is a point of focus and their efforts also contribute to the feeling of hope and that change is possible (Stott, Smith, Williams & Godlee, 2019).

Next to all of the strategies covered so far, there are some more straightforward and concrete ways to engage people to become active. First, the organizations sometimes provided guidance to their audience in how to handle certain situation or how they should go

about improving their personal situation in terms of environmental impact. Here, they did things such as providing a step-by-step guide, sharing tips, giving directions, or stating specific suggestions for personal improvement. This direct focus on ‘How you can help’ can be effective in that people are given concrete support in taking action. Even more prominent are posts where the audience is directly encouraged or asked to do something. This came forward very often. Such posts include encouragements or requests to share, like, address someone, vote, donate, watch, become informed, click, follow, listen, read, register, sign and many other things. Lastly, there are a variety of posts that promote and talk about events, expeditions and other activities for the audience to partake in. These posts directly invite people to become active participants. It ranges from an online viewing party on Facebook, to a real-life gathering that fosters discussion and has guest-speakers, to volunteering and career opportunities.

#### 4.4. The presence and communication of Advocacy

The final sub-question that needs to be answered is: *How is the element of advocacy included in the organizations’ Facebook post?* As was briefly argued in the theoretical framework, advocacy can not necessarily be seen as simply an additional element to strategic communication as was the case for ‘disclosure, transparency & openness’, ‘information dissemination’, ‘interactivity’, ‘engagement & relationship-building’, and strategic alliances. Rather, this work argues and found that the different elements combined contribute to being successful in advocacy. As was observed during the coding, ENGOs communicated things such as concrete actions, support from others, alliances, political or legal changes, solutions and suggestions, engaging the audience and so forth. Every single category that was established directly or indirectly advances the goal of advocacy in its own way.

Taking Ciszek’s (2017) elements of public relations and activism related to advocacy, interaction or engagement with the public as well as information and emphasis on improving environmental issues, for example, contribute to advocacy. This can be combined with Yang & Saffer’s arguments about the importance of public discourse and influencing the media’s agenda to support advocacy targets. They argue for the importance of factors such as allies and engagement in achieving successful social change. All of these elements have clearly and regularly been included in the ENGOs Facebook content as was explained in previous sections. Interestingly, although Betsill & Corell (2001) argued for the power of money, knowledge and information, money does not seem to be a prioritized focus. As said, a majority of posts focus on spreading information and creating knowledge and only a select

few posts focus on donations and fundraisers. This is not to say that the organizations do not value money or utilize it as a major resource, but it is not focused on throughout Facebook communication. Here, the feeling of being genuinely dedicated to the organizational goals and spreading the message rather than wanting to ‘take people’s money’ so to say, might be seen as the most effective.

The previously discussed aim of influencing the media’s agenda can, in turn, be tied in with Jones’s (2017) approach of ‘mediatisation’, in which an ENGO would start working with or like other media organizations. While mediatisation was only observed to a certain extent and NGOs still differ substantially from media organizations, there were a variety of instances where they operated with or somewhat like one. ENGOs are not journalists themselves but in a lot of posts there was a major emphasis on spreading and reporting information. Additionally, on a regular basis there were posts in which the organization included a newspaper article by big brands like the Guardian. While not directly resorting to journalism themselves, they indirectly ‘worked with’ a journalist company and presented journalistic content. Moreover, several times a media production was posted. An example of this is a documentary created by Earthwatch that focuses on volunteers and researchers involved with the organization or the repeated promotion of an environmental documentary that was about to be aired. In doing so, the organizations tried to encourage people to watch content like this and to shape their opinion in a way that aligns with the organization. The essence of ‘mediatisation’ is that media organizations can affect public discourse and thereby social and political conversations (Yang & Saffer). The latter was also covered throughout the analyzed Facebook posts. References to politicians acting in a wrongful or rightful way, positive or negative legislation that was (about to be) passed, appeals and suggestions to the government about the need for change, and more.

Although it was found that the various strategic communication elements were all covered (to different extents) and contribute to advocacy, communication on advocacy itself was not as prevalent. Taking into account advocacy as an overarching goal that the other elements contribute to, communication on advocacy itself might not be needed or effective. Rather, a focus on elements related to advocacy such as mediatisation or public discourse could get an increased focus in optimizing advocacy outcomes.

#### 4.5. Discussion

As can be seen in the coding tree, the selective codes resulting from the coding process are: (1) Strategic Alliances, (2) Disclosure, transparency and openness, (3)

Engagement and relationship-building, (4) Information dissemination, and (5) Interactivity. These are the same themes that were discussed in the theoretical framework and since the axial codes can be divided into these categories it was decided to use them as selective codes and to guide the discussion through them. In doing so, it highlights how strategic communication is applied by the studied ENGOs, as well as in which aspects they maybe fall short in doing so or different choices seem to consciously be made.

#### 4.5.1. Disclosure, transparency & openness

Disclosure, transparency and openness is the smallest category in terms of open codes that came forward from the coding process. The organizations do have various ways to disclose and to be transparent and open but there are also opportunities for improvement. As was discussed earlier in the theoretical framework, disclosure, transparency & openness are important in establishing a certain level of trust between ENGOs and their audience/stakeholders. Finding a good balance in what to share and what not to share is therefore essential. An explanation for the limited use of disclosure, transparency & openness might be that the organization use more traditional ways of communication such as their website or press releases and reports to ensure this. It might be worth considering an increase of Facebook communication on this topic. Taking into account the relevance of trust that was discussed earlier, it would be especially useful to put more emphasis on this category to increase trustworthiness and credibility. This also requires more insight on how information is being gathered (Karlsson, 2010), as it is not always communicated where the information comes from.

Christensen & Cornelissen (2015) describe a tendency towards signaling ‘disclosure, transparency & openness’ and a focus on inviting customers in for a kind of backstage view. An openness and willingness that suggests the organization has nothing to hide. This does apply to the ENGO communication. They show attempts to be open and organize events to inform people, to take them on the journey, to involve them in campaigns, and so forth. Christensen & Cornelissen’s (2015) further argue that disclosure, transparency & openness are more or less taken for granted, which might reflect the relative lack of attention paid to it by ENGOs. Yet, the question remains whether this matters if this taken-for-granted-ness is widely accepted by the public, as it seems to be (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2015).

In a way, the overall analysis has shown that all of the strategic communication elements are not fully separated, stand-alone entities. Rather, they tend to display some overlap and complement each other. An example is the idea of ‘Disclosure, transparency and

openness', which is closely interlinked with the strategy of 'Information dissemination' or even 'strategic alliances'. As the alliance reflects a certain level of trust and support from others for the ENGO it might reaffirm their legitimacy and credibility. In the same way, 'Interactivity' is closely related to 'Engagement and relationship-building' in that interactive elements and posts can be engaging and help build relationships at the same time.

#### 4.5.2. Information dissemination

Information dissemination has also proven to be an important category that is practiced widely by all ENGOs that are studied in this research. The key to getting people involved and on their side is, first and foremost, to make them aware and informed about the problems that are going on and what needs to happen to make the world a better place. If people and companies lack the knowledge or are ignorant about the facts that come with the current environmental situation, it is unlikely they will see the need for ENGOs and their goals. The creative ways in which information is spread have been placed in the context of strategic communication above. It has become clear that the organizations do not simply state information but have a variety of ways to make things known and explain things to the world. A clear choice seemed to be made as well on referring to sources that are known to be more central/objective, such as the Guardian, rather than extremely leftist or 'green'.

#### 4.5.3. Interactivity

The interactive element of ENGO communication seems to be very important in getting the audience to move from becoming informed and aware to acting and actively contributing to the organization's objectives. Some organizations really try to go the extra length to achieve this while others seem a bit 'stuck' in the information-distribution process. Even when presenting interactive elements, it is important that the post invites to actually interact. What is in a video, for example, is irrelevant if the audience member does not even get to the point of watching the video. The focus, then, should be on how the post communicates and encourages to watch the video. If this is not done effectively, someone will not be motivated to click a link, read an article, and so forth. When looking at the posts that were most reacted to by the audience, for example, it is seen that all of them include both text and pictures. Moreover, they include either a personal story or positive/negative focused engagement in combination with shocking information.

#### 4.5.4. Engagement & relationship-building

Engagement and relationship-building is the biggest category that came forward from the coding process, in both the number of axial and open codes. The organizations contribute to this element in many different ways and seem to be aware of how important this aspect of strategic communication is. No new or unexpected findings were discovered on this part. These limited findings might be attributed to the fact that engagement was only measured from organizations towards stakeholders rather than between the two parties.

#### 4.5.5. Strategic Alliances

In terms of axial codes linked to it, this selective code is the most limited one. Still, the coding process has shown that alliances are important to the ENGOs and that they communicate them to their audience on Facebook frequently. Here, not only were strategic alliances with companies communicated, but a variety of other alliances as well (such as collaborations with other organizations or with climate activists). This has other implications than an alliance with a for-profit company. In the theoretical framework, the main focus was on such for-profit, corporate alliances but there was an observed emphasis on other types of partnerships. The organizations mostly referred to or worked with other organizations with similar goals and fellow climate activists. Emphasis was put on encouraging and supporting such people, for example through highlighting efforts made by a younger generation of climate activists. The way in which corporations are present in the ENGOs Facebook content is mostly through being highlighted as wrong-doers and facing criticism. As it is not the focus of this study, it is unclear whether corporate alliances do exist but simply are not communicated. However, in either case, there seems to be a need for more corporate alliances, or communication on corporate alliances. An explanation for the lack of this could be that for smaller, lesser-known organizations it can be difficult to find a suitable partner that is willing to team up with them, as it might be more effective to team up with a big NGO that is very present in the media and public discourse (Awad, 2019). At the same time, Greenpeace, the organization with the biggest reach out of the four, was the one that communicated alliances the least. Here, then, it seems that they have achieved enough media representation and brand awareness that they do not need alliances as much to succeed.

Attention was also paid to alliance opportunities that were missing or rare. Considering the overarching aim of advocacy, what could be valuable are collaborations with the government, government officials, or other power political figures. This was missing and communication relating to the government was mostly focused on criticizing and addressing

them online. If there are opportunities to find government allies and to communicate this on Facebook, that could be beneficial to the ENGOS in affecting political conversations and decisions.

#### 4.5.6. Advocacy

After discussing these selective codes and the corresponding axial codes and examples of open codes in detail, the analysis will also reflect upon the element of advocacy (which is also included in the theoretical framework). As it was realized in the theoretical framework that advocacy could function as the overarching aim of strategic communication and, thus, is a combination of the elements discussed above, I chose not to use it as a selective code on its own.

Yang & Saffer (2018) highlight the importance of network positions and stakeholder engagement in increasing media coverage and successfully bringing about social change. In this sense, communication on advocacy might seem limited because the focus of this work is organizational communication to stakeholders. It does not take into account networked relations and stakeholder/organization engagement.

While not necessarily fully or always adhering to strategic communication factors, it seems that these ENGOS have realized the power of social media, and in particular Facebook. As Seo, Kim & Yang (2009) imply that NGOs would benefit from recognizing the value of new media communication and to use it towards improving public relations. Especially for non-profit organizations with limited resources, new media can be significantly helpful (Seo, Kim & Yang, 2009). The findings from this study suggest that, although improvements can always be made, in general ENGOS have incorporated Facebook communication as a useful tool and they recognize benefits that it has to offer. While the results, thus, largely consist of deductive validation and it confirms ENGO communication largely adheres to the strategic communication framework, some additional significant findings were made.

## 5. Conclusion

As the important role of social media in organizational communication is increasingly recognized, the need to examine and establish online communication strategies has intensified. NGOs form a special type of organization that should largely focus on and benefit from online communication in bringing about social change and affecting policymaking. An effective framework that was identified was that of strategic communication. The purpose of this research was to determine if and how environmental non-governmental organizations apply strategic communication in the content that they present on their Facebook pages. The first sub-question intended to identify the different types of content that is communicated. It showed the variety of posts and how ENGOs try to implement a combination of textual and visual elements. The second sub-question tied into this by looking at how information is presented. While it was confirmed that a main aim and utilized strategy of ENGOs Facebook communication is information dissemination, it showed limited appliance of the element of 'disclosure, transparency & openness'. More common was the provision of information on current issues and possibilities for solving them, and other external focuses of information-sharing. The third sub-question aimed to make meaning of ways of engagement. It established the many ways in which interactivity, engagement and relationship-building was encouraged and aimed for. The final sub-question looked at the element of advocacy and showed that while the other elements all contribute to advocacy goals to a certain extent, direct communication on advocacy efforts is limited.

As the analysis has been carried out and, through its findings, the sub-questions have been answered, the main research question can now be answered: *How do ENGOs apply strategic communication on Facebook to inform about, engage on and advocate on issues regarding the environment?* As the results of the coding process were analysed and linked to the theory it was shown that the theoretical framework was largely validated. This in itself provides an answer to the main research question as elements that were included in the theoretical framework were also present in practice. It can be argued that in this sense, the theory was suitable to the research. As ENGOs largely make use of the strategic communication framework, it indicates that they value and recognize the importance and opportunities that social media use offers. This was questioned and reason for concern as effective communication and social media use affect their success in bringing about social change.

There were also some differing findings that were discovered as a result of the analysis, that contrasted with the strategic communication framework. First, the importance of disclosure, transparency & openness was not as emphasized. While organizations still made efforts to appear transparent, it did not seem to be one of their priorities. Additionally, the finding that advocacy functions more as an overarching theme to the other strategic communication elements suggests that an increased focus should be put on this concept in both theoretical and practical implications. It came forward that advocacy is closely tied with public relations & discourse as well as media coverage. Considering advocacy as an overarching ENGO aim, then, it can be argued that a strategic communication framework in the context of ENGOs should include an element such as mediatisation or public discourse navigation as it is crucial in advocacy. No significant other differing findings were made. While this study attempted to conduct explorative research, the analysis and findings have mostly resulted in deductive validation of the strategic communication framework. In a way, the fact that the strategic communication framework was almost fully confirmed through the analysis of ENGO Facebook data, suggests that its elements could be considered as quite straightforward and almost fully integrated as an essential part of Facebook communication. Perhaps it is time for the development and inductive exploration of a new framework that goes beyond that of strategic communication, to help make ENGOs stand out more in the competitive market.

Despite careful consideration of different factors, some limitations to this research can be identified. The first limitation is linked to the fact that this study focused on organizational communication to stakeholders only. This decision was made to stay within the scope of this work and allowed for a detailed exploration of this level of communication. Yet, while this was a conscious decision, it limits the opportunity of fully exploring significant elements such as interactivity and engagement. Moreover, the research assessed to what extent strategic communication theory is applied in practice by NGOs. However, it might be the case that the theory is not necessarily successful in practice. It can be argued that research focused on existing practices as a starting point will be more telling. Here, one could study different NGO practices, evaluate their efficiency and successful use and relate it to existing theory or formulate new theory. Further research suggestions regarding this are stated further below. Another limitation to consider is the fully qualitative approach to the research. Qualitative content analysis is less clearly formulated and strictly defined as quantitative research and it can be difficult to approach it correctly. It was attempted to do so in the best

way possible to the best of the author's knowledge. Finally, the nature of the topic of environmental non-governmental organizations might have affected objectivity. It is a topic that many have strong opinions on and one's personality and position in life can affect interpretations and somewhat bias the discussion.

Lastly, some suggestions for further research will be provided. This study invites more elaborate research on the topic of NGO Facebook communication. First of all, research to keep track of developments within the area of online NGO communication is desirable as it is an everchanging environment. Moreover, the focus of this study was one-sided in the sense that it focused solely on organization-to-stakeholder communication. During this research, the importance of interactivity and dynamic two-way communication clearly came forward on more than one occasion. Therefore, extended research with a shifted or added focus on this type of communication is needed still. Here, things such as stakeholder-to-organization communication, organization vs. stakeholder interaction and dialog, and the comment section on Facebook should be taken into account. In doing so, it might be fruitful to implement a quantitative approach to get a full exploration of data. In addition, the quantitative approach can facilitate research on the effectiveness of the used strategies and, thereby, provide implications for future social media endeavors. This is relevant from a business perspective because it provides information on strategies that can and are chosen to be used. Another suggestion is to carry out interviews in relation to this topic, as it will provide insights on why certain decisions are made or why certain strategies are used and considered to be effective. Such extended efforts will complement the current findings and deepen and expand knowledge in the relevant field of online communication.

## Reference List

- 11 storytelling strategies that will boost your NGO's fundraising. (2017, August 03). Retrieved from <http://beyondbordersmedia.com/2017/08/03/11-storytelling-strategies-that-will-boost-your-fundraising/>
- Andrews, K. T., & Edwards, B. (2004). Advocacy Organizations in the U.S. Political Process. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 30(1), 479–506. doi: 10.1146/annurev.soc.30.012703.110542/
- Awad, J. (2019, April 24). 5 successful corporate partnerships with small NGOs. *Bond.org*. Retrieved from <https://www.bond.org.uk/news/2019/04/5-successful-corporate-partnerships-with-small-ngos>
- Babbie, E. (2018). *The Basics of Social Research*. Boston: CENGAGE Learning.
- Berg, B. L. (2001). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 4th ed.
- Betsill, M. M., & Corell, E. (2001). NGO influence in international environmental negotiations: a framework for analysis. *Global environmental politics*, 1(4), 65-85.
- Blair, E. (2015). A reflexive exploration of two qualitative data coding techniques. *Journal of Methods and Measurement in the Social Sciences*, 6(1), 14-29.
- Boeije, H. (2010). *Analysis in qualitative research*. London: Sage.
- Bortree, D. S., & Seltzer, T. (2009). Dialogic strategies and outcomes: An analysis of environmental advocacy groups' Facebook profiles. *Public Relations Review*, 35(3), 317–319. doi: 10.1016/j.pubrev.2009.05.002
- Bouchery, Y., Corbett, C. J., Fransoo, J. C., & Tan, T. (2018). *Sustainable Supply Chains A Research-Based Textbook on Operations and Strategy*. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Brennen, B. S. (2017). *Qualitative research methods for media studies*. Routledge.
- Bullock, L. (2018, November 27). The Biggest Social Media Fails Of 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/lilachbullock/2018/11/27/biggest-social-media-fails-2018/#3f4ad107518f>
- Caprino, K. (2018, March 23). How Storytelling Can Improve Business Communication And Transform Workplaces. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kathycaprino/2018/03/23/how-storytelling-can-improve-business-communication-and-transform-workplaces/#4818ee282b83>
- Cho, M., Schweickart, T., & Haase, A. (2014). Public engagement with nonprofit

- organizations on Facebook. *Public Relations Review*, 40(3), 565-567.  
doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2014.01.008
- Christensen, L. (2002). Corporate communication: the challenge of transparency. *Corporate communications: an international journal*, 7(3), 162-168.
- Christensen, L. T., & Cornelissen, J. (2015). Organizational transparency as myth and metaphor. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 18(2), 132–149. doi: 10.1177/1368431014555256
- Ciszek, E. (2017). Activist strategic communication for social change: A transnational case study of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender activism. *Journal of Communication*, 67(5), 702-718. doi:10.1111/jcom.12319
- Crawford, K. (2009). Following you: Disciplines of listening in social media. *Continuum*, 23(4), 525–535. doi: 10.1080/10304310903003270
- Dickinson, S., & Barker, A. (2007). Evaluations of branding alliances between non-profit and commercial brand partners: The transfer of affect. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 12(1), 75-89. doi:10.1002/nvsm.291
- Dudo, A., & Kahlor, L. (Eds.). (2016). *Strategic communication: New agendas in communication*. Routledge.
- Dür, A., & Bièvre, D. D. (2007). Inclusion without Influence? NGOs in European Trade Policy. *Journal of Public Policy*, 27(1), 79–101. doi: 10.1017/s0143814x0700061x
- Elo, S., & Kyngäs, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 62(1), 107-115. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04569.x
- Gainer, B. (2010). Marketing for Nonprofit Organizations. In David O. Renz (Ed.), *The JosseyBass Handbook of Nonprofit Leadership and Management* (301-328). San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass.
- George, S. (2014, December 11). Corporations and NGOs working in partnership to create social change. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2014/dec/11/corporations-and-ngos-working-in-partnership-to-create-social-change>
- Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research. *The Qualitative Report*, 8(4), 597-606. Retrieved from <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol8/iss4/6>
- Guo, C., & Saxton, G. D. (2014). Tweeting Social Change: How Social Media Are Changing Nonprofit Advocacy. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 43(1), 57–79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764012471585>

- Hallahan, K., Holtzhausen, D., Ruler, B., Verčič, D., & Sriramesh, K. (2007). Defining Strategic Communication, *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 1(1), 3-35, doi: 10.1080/15531180701285244
- Hanna, R., Rohm, A., & Crittenden, V. L. (2011). We're all connected: The power of the social media ecosystem. *Business Horizons*, 54(3), 265–273. doi: 10.1016/j.bushor.2011.01.007
- Hansen, A. (2011). Communication, media and environment: Towards reconnecting research on the production, content and social implications of environmental communication. *International Communication Gazette*, 73(1-2), 7-25. doi:10.1177/1748048510386739
- Harrigan, K. (2017). “Strategic alliances as agents of competitive change”. In *Collaborative Strategy*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781783479580.00010>
- Hodkinson, P. (2008). Grounded theory and inductive research. *Researching social life*, 3, 81-100.
- Holt, D. (2016). Branding in the Age of Social Media. *Harvard Business Review*, 94(3), 40-50. Retrieved from <https://search-ebshost-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=buh&AN=113227919&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Holzner, B. (2007). Transparency and Global Change. *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*. doi: 10.1002/9781405165518.wbeost049
- Hsieh, H.-F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277–1288. doi: 10.1177/1049732305276687
- Hue, D. T. (2017). Fourth Generation NGOs: Communication Strategies in Social Campaigning and Resource Mobilization. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 29(2), 119-147. doi:10.1080/10495142.2017.1293583
- Jones, B. (2017). Looking Good: Mediatisation and International NGOs. *The European Journal of Development Research*, 29(1), 176-191. doi:10.1057/ejdr.2015.87
- Karlsson, M. (2010). Rituals Of Transparency. *Journalism Studies*, 11(4), 535–545. doi: 10.1080/14616701003638400
- Kietzmann, J. H., Hermkens, K., McCarthy, I. P., & Silvestre, B. S. (2011). Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. *Business Horizons*, 54(3), 241-251. doi:10.1016/j.bushor.2011.01.005

- Lambell, R., Ramia, G., Nyland, C., & Michelotti, M. (2008). NGOs and international business research: Progress, prospects and problems. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, *10*(1), 75-92.
- Laufer, D., Silvera, D. H., McBride, J. B., & Schertzer, S. M. (2010). Communicating charity successes across cultures. *European Journal of Marketing*, *44*(9/10), 1322–1333. doi: 10.1108/03090561011062862
- Lovejoy, K., & Saxton, G. D. (2012). Information, Community, and Action: How Nonprofit Organizations Use Social Media. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *17*(3), 337-353. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2012.01576.x
- Milde, K., & Yawson, R. M. (2017). Strategies for Social Media Use in Nonprofits. *Journal of Management Policy and Practice*, *18*(1), 19-27.
- Mort, G. S., Weerawardena, J., & Williamson, B. (2007). Branding in the Non-profit Context: The Case of Surf Life Saving Australia. *Australasian Marketing Journal (AMJ)*, *15*(2), 108–119. doi: 10.1016/s1441-3582(07)70047-2
- Ohanyan, A. (2009). Policy Wars for Peace: Network Model of NGO Behavior. *International Studies Review*, *11*(3), 475–501. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2486.2009.00870.x
- Patterson, S. J., & Radtke, J. M. (2009). *Strategic communications for nonprofit organizations: Seven steps to creating a successful plan*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Pressgrove, G. N., & McKeever, B. W. (2016). Nonprofit relationship management: Extending the organization-public relationship to loyalty and behaviors. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *28*(3-4), 193-211. doi:10.1080/1062726x.2016.1233106/
- Saxton, G. D., & Waters, R. D. (2014). What do Stakeholders Like on Facebook? Examining Public Reactions to Nonprofit Organizations' Informational, Promotional, and Community-Building Messages. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *26*(3), 280–299. doi: 10.1080/1062726x.2014.908721
- Seo, H., Kim, J. Y., & Yang, S. (2009). Global activism and new media: A study of transnational NGOs' online public relations. *Public Relations Review*, *35*(2), 123-126. doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2009.02.002
- Shumate, M., & Oconnor, A. (2010). The Symbiotic Sustainability Model: Conceptualizing NGO-Corporate Alliance Communication. *Journal of Communication*, *60*(3), 577-609. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2010.01498.x
- Siegel, A. A. (2016). *Nonprofit Storytelling: Framing the Message for Compelling Communication* (Unpublished master's honors thesis). Murray State University. doi:https://digitalcommons.murraystate.edu/honorsthesis/4

- Sorenson, S., & Adkins, A. (2019, August 05). Why Customer Engagement Matters So Much Now. Retrieved from <https://news.gallup.com/businessjournal/172637/why-customer-engagement-matters.aspx>
- Stafford, E. R., Polonsky, M. J., & Hartman, C. L. (2000). Environmental NGO-business collaboration and strategic bridging: a case analysis of the Greenpeace-Foron Alliance. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 9(2), 122–135. doi: 10.1002/(sici)1099-0836(200003/04)9:2<122::aid-bse232>3.0.co;2-c
- Stott, R., Smith, R., Williams, R., & Godlee, F. (2019). Schoolchildren’s activism is a lesson for health professionals. *Bmj*, 11938. doi: 10.1136/bmj.11938
- Thrall, A. T., Stecula, D., & Sweet, D. (2014). May We Have Your Attention Please? Human-Rights NGOs and the Problem of Global Communication. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 19(2), 135-159. doi:10.1177/1940161213519132
- Tiago M, & Veríssimo, J. M. (2014). Digital marketing and social media: Why bother? *Business Horizons*, 57(6), 703-708. doi:10.1016/j.bushor.2014.07.002
- Tripathi, S., & Verma, S. (2018). Social media, an emerging platform for relationship building: A study of engagement with nongovernment organizations in India. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 23(1), n/a. doi:10.1002/nvsm.1589
- Voeth, M., & Herbst, U. (2008). The Concept of Brand Personality as an Instrument for Advanced Non-Profit Branding—An Empirical Analysis. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 19(1), 71–97. doi: 10.1300/j054v19n01\_04
- Waters, R. D. (2007). Nonprofit organizations' use of the internet: A content analysis of communication trends on the internet sites of the philanthropy 400. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 18(1), 59-76.
- Waters, R. D. (2010). The use of social media by nonprofit organizations: An examination from the diffusion of innovations perspective. In *Social computing: Concepts, methodologies, tools, and applications* (pp. 1420-1432). IGI Global.
- Waters, R. D., Burnett, E., Lamm, A., & Lucas, J. (2009). Engaging stakeholders through social networking: How nonprofit organizations are using Facebook. *Public Relations Review*, 35(2), 102. doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2009.01.006
- Wildemuth, B. M. (Ed.). (2016). *Applications of social research methods to questions in information and library science*. ABC-CLIO.
- Why storytelling is essential to effective communication. (2018, January 31). Retrieved from <https://templaradvisors.com/blog/storytelling-effective-communication>

- Yan, J. (2011). Social media in branding: Fulfilling a need. *Journal of Brand Management*, 18(9), 688–696. doi: 10.1057/bm.2011.19
- Yang, A., & Saffer, A. (2018). NGOs' Advocacy in the 2015 Refugee Crisis: A Study of Agenda Building in the Digital Age. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 62(4), 421–439. doi: 10.1177/0002764218759578

## Appendix A: The Coding Tree

| Selective codes              | Axial codes                      | Open codes                               | #  |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----|
| Strategic alliances          | Different age groups/generations | Controversial young entrepreneur         | 1  |
|                              |                                  | Focus on next generation                 | 19 |
|                              |                                  | Older generation contributes             | 1  |
|                              |                                  | One of our biggest prizes yet            | 1  |
|                              |                                  | Planet Humans by 12yo Jessi              | 1  |
|                              |                                  | 'Teen inspires youth demonstrations'     | 2  |
|                              |                                  | Young generation contributes             | 28 |
|                              |                                  | Youth education event                    | 3  |
|                              |                                  | Youth/school-strike                      | 18 |
|                              | Efforts by various parties       | Action against inaction                  | 10 |
|                              |                                  | Action against oil                       | 8  |
|                              |                                  | Against the law                          | 1  |
|                              |                                  | Climate action                           | 24 |
|                              |                                  | Commitment to wildlife-friendly policies | 1  |
|                              |                                  | 'Dynamic ocean management'               | 1  |
|                              |                                  | Emphasizes efforts made                  | 99 |
|                              |                                  | Focus on people's efforts                | 36 |
|                              |                                  | Hannah's Happiness Project               | 1  |
|                              |                                  | Highlighting one city's efforts          | 8  |
|                              |                                  | International negotiations               | 1  |
|                              |                                  | Local efforts                            | 27 |
|                              |                                  | Long-term commitment                     | 5  |
|                              |                                  | Rebellious Grandpa                       | 1  |
|                              |                                  | Research efforts and results             | 58 |
|                              |                                  | Scientist efforts                        | 11 |
|                              |                                  | Tree campaign                            | 1  |
|                              |                                  | Volunteering efforts                     | 20 |
|                              |                                  | WILD act                                 | 2  |
|                              | Focus on community               | Communities put at risk                  | 5  |
|                              |                                  | Community group 'A Voice for Leith Hill' | 1  |
| Community Power              |                                  | 3                                        |    |
| 'Conservation movement'      |                                  | 2                                        |    |
| Engaging diverse community   |                                  | 7                                        |    |
| Focus on unity, not division |                                  | 5                                        |    |
| Global movement              |                                  | 7                                        |    |
| Indigenous Peoples           |                                  | 10                                       |    |
| Joint effort is needed       |                                  | 27                                       |    |

|                                                        |                                                |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|----|
|                                                        | Learning from others                           | 2  |
|                                                        | Learning skills                                | 1  |
|                                                        | Lessons from Martin Luther King Jr.            | 1  |
|                                                        | Let Communities Decide                         | 2  |
|                                                        | Let's keep it up!                              | 1  |
|                                                        | Muslim community                               | 1  |
|                                                        | People power                                   | 2  |
|                                                        | Queer community                                | 1  |
|                                                        | Sharing someone else's post                    | 44 |
|                                                        | Sharing someone's tweet                        | 1  |
|                                                        | Solidarity                                     | 16 |
|                                                        | Tribal perspective                             | 4  |
| Reference to/affiliation with a person or organization | Affiliation with David Attenborough            | 9  |
|                                                        | Affiliation with Dr. Caroline Ng'weno          | 1  |
|                                                        | Affiliation with Dr. Dian Fossey               | 1  |
|                                                        | Affiliation with Dr. Margaret Hiza Redsteer    | 1  |
|                                                        | Affiliation with Dr. Nucharin Songsasen        | 3  |
|                                                        | Affiliation with Ella Gilbert                  | 1  |
|                                                        | Affiliation with Frederick Hewett              | 1  |
|                                                        | Affiliation with homebuilder Taylor Morrison   | 1  |
|                                                        | Affiliation with Sy Montgomery                 | 9  |
|                                                        | Appalachian Beekeeping Collective              | 1  |
|                                                        | Association of Northwest Steelheaders          | 2  |
|                                                        | Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge               | 1  |
|                                                        | Bureau of Land Management                      | 1  |
|                                                        | Collaboration anti-fracking Sharon Wilson      | 3  |
|                                                        | Collaboration Triodos Bank UK                  | 1  |
|                                                        | Collaboration with Alex Monroe                 | 2  |
|                                                        | Collaboration with Andy Laub Films             | 1  |
|                                                        | Collaboration with Community Energy London     | 1  |
|                                                        | Collaboration with tribes                      | 1  |
|                                                        | Collaboration with Conservation Law Foundation | 1  |
|                                                        | Collaboration with Dr. Tim Thornton            | 1  |
|                                                        | Collaboration with Extinction Rebellion        | 1  |
|                                                        | Collaboration with Keystone RV                 | 1  |
|                                                        | Collaboration with Liverpool Green Party       | 1  |
|                                                        | Collaboration with Liverpool University        | 1  |
|                                                        | Collaboration with National Audubon Society    | 1  |
|                                                        | Collaboration with NRDC                        | 1  |
|                                                        | Collaboration with Prof. David Smythe          | 1  |

|  |                                                |    |
|--|------------------------------------------------|----|
|  | Collaboration with Vineyard Wind               | 1  |
|  | Collaboration with Yogi Bear's Jellystone Park | 1  |
|  | Environmental Protection Agency                | 1  |
|  | Fodor's Travel                                 | 1  |
|  | National Bison Range Refuge Complex            | 1  |
|  | National Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey           | 1  |
|  | Naturalist David Mizejewski                    | 5  |
|  | New Mexico Wildlife Federation                 | 1  |
|  | Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife         | 1  |
|  | Parent' Choice Foundation                      | 1  |
|  | Reference to Friends of the Earth              | 1  |
|  | Reference to Greta Thunberg                    | 10 |
|  | Reference to Jane Goodall                      | 1  |
|  | Reference to specific volunteer                | 1  |
|  | Refers to AJ+                                  | 1  |
|  | Refers to Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez             | 2  |
|  | Refers to another organization                 | 11 |
|  | Refers to artist Robert Szucs                  | 1  |
|  | Refers to artist Sinasi Yelkency               | 1  |
|  | Refers to Bernat Claramunt                     | 1  |
|  | Refers to Coner Youngblood                     | 1  |
|  | Refers to Craig Kelly                          | 1  |
|  | Refers to Earthworks                           | 3  |
|  | Refers to Ecotricity                           | 3  |
|  | Refers to FOE lawyer Katie de Kauwe            | 1  |
|  | Refers to Friends of the Earth International   | 1  |
|  | Refers to My World My Home                     | 1  |
|  | Refers to partnership                          | 33 |
|  | Refers to poet Mary Oliver                     | 1  |
|  | Refers to Roseacre Awareness Group             | 1  |
|  | Refers to volunteer Holly O'Neal               | 1  |
|  | Refers to Wyoming Public Radio & Media         | 1  |
|  | Special guest comedian Rachel Parris           | 1  |
|  | Spirit Mountain Community Fund                 | 1  |
|  | The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde         | 1  |
|  | The Land and Water Conservation Fund           | 4  |
|  | U.S. Department of the Interior                | 1  |
|  | UNFCCC                                         | 1  |
|  | United Nations                                 | 2  |
|  | Wildlife Austin                                | 1  |
|  | Wildlife in the changing Andorran Pyrenees     | 1  |
|  | Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution           | 2  |

|                                       |                                             |                                                   |    |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|----|
|                                       |                                             | Woods Hole Sea Grant                              | 1  |
|                                       | Support from others                         | Mayors' Monarch Pledge                            | 1  |
|                                       |                                             | Support from another party                        | 9  |
|                                       |                                             | Support from other people                         | 13 |
|                                       |                                             | Support from Postcode Lottery                     | 1  |
| Disclosure, transparency and openness | Communication about the organization itself | Leader in wildlife conservation research & policy | 1  |
|                                       |                                             | Directly promoting the organization               | 22 |
|                                       |                                             | Earthwatch contribution mentioned                 | 12 |
|                                       |                                             | Environmental targets                             | 6  |
|                                       |                                             | Fundraising targets                               | 1  |
|                                       |                                             | Goals for the new year                            | 1  |
|                                       |                                             | Local branch of organization                      | 21 |
|                                       |                                             | NWF EcoLeader Initiative                          | 1  |
|                                       |                                             | NWF is supporting NWF - fundraiser                | 10 |
|                                       |                                             | NWF Northern Rockies and Prairies team            | 1  |
|                                       |                                             | Organization's anniversary                        | 3  |
|                                       |                                             | Receiving awards                                  | 1  |
|                                       |                                             | Stating organizational goals                      | 8  |
|                                       |                                             | The biggest grassroots environmental network      | 1  |
|                                       | Critical of someone or something            | Bolsonaro government                              | 1  |
|                                       |                                             | Climate change deniers                            | 1  |
|                                       |                                             | Contradictory statements/actions                  | 2  |
|                                       |                                             | Critical of certain actions                       | 22 |
|                                       |                                             | Critical of Trump Administration                  | 1  |
|                                       |                                             | government shutdown consequences                  | 2  |
|                                       |                                             | Greedy industry                                   | 2  |
|                                       |                                             | 'Greenwashing' of sports                          | 1  |
|                                       |                                             | Harmful proposal by other party                   | 6  |
|                                       |                                             | Issues with outsourcing                           | 1  |
|                                       |                                             | Male-dominated field                              | 1  |
|                                       |                                             | Man vs. Mountain Lion                             | 1  |
|                                       |                                             | Non-support/Actions taken against ENGO            | 25 |
|                                       |                                             | Opposing parties                                  | 28 |
|                                       |                                             | Parties avoiding the issue                        | 2  |
|                                       |                                             | Re-earn the public trust                          | 1  |
|                                       |                                             | Ruining the earth                                 | 1  |
|                                       |                                             | Showing skepticism                                | 4  |
|                                       |                                             | Stop treating seas as a sewer                     | 1  |
|                                       |                                             | the problem with the Renewable Fuel Standard      | 1  |
|                                       |                                             | Trump: Fossil Fool                                | 1  |
|                                       |                                             | Voicing disagreement                              | 3  |

|                                      |                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                      | Focus on the negative                  | A losing battle<br>'Biggest existential threats'<br>Emphasizes negative developments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 1<br>1<br>64                                                   |
|                                      | Focus on the positive                  | 2018 Recap: Only good news<br>A win for the organization<br>Brilliant news!<br>Celebrate<br>Emphasizes positive development<br>Hoped for the best<br>Sharing positivity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 4<br>4<br>1<br>11<br>70<br>1<br>5                              |
|                                      | Honesty                                | Correcting wrongful information<br>Statement of honesty<br>Uncertainty<br>We don't know ...<br>We have no idea ...                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 4<br>1<br>1<br>1<br>1                                          |
|                                      | Increasing trustworthiness/credibility | Academic tone<br>Accountability<br>Expert input<br>Gathering data<br>Taking safety into account<br>This is what happened<br>Verifying effectiveness of certain techniques                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 7<br>1<br>5<br>3<br>2<br>1<br>2                                |
|                                      | Voicing frustrations                   | Deep pockets<br>Faux-support<br>Friends in high places<br>Highlighting unfairness<br>Hits the poorest the hardest                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 1<br>2<br>1<br>6<br>1                                          |
| Engagement and relationship-building | Attention-grabbing                     | Attention-grabbing/engaging use of emoji<br>'Breaking News' headline<br>Buzzwords like: alarming, insectageddon, insect apocalypse<br>Buzzwords like: catastrophe, fears, frightening<br>Buzzwords like: crime scene, illegal, paradise<br>Buzzwords like: 'deadly consequences'<br>Buzzwords like: irreversible<br>'Crisis'<br>Mysterious dinner snake<br>Mystery: Angel shark<br>Mystery: Ocean sunfish<br>'REVEALED' headline<br>Vague, attention-grabbing caption | 14<br>4<br>2<br>1<br>1<br>1<br>1<br>2<br>1<br>1<br>1<br>1<br>4 |

|                                                |                                          |    |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----|
| Celebrating/highlighting a special day or time | #InternationalForestDay                  | 2  |
|                                                | #NationalGardeningDay                    | 1  |
|                                                | April fool's post                        | 2  |
|                                                | Blue monday                              | 1  |
|                                                | Earth Day                                | 10 |
|                                                | Earth Month                              | 2  |
|                                                | Garden for Wildlife month                | 1  |
|                                                | Happy #WildlifeWednesday                 | 3  |
|                                                | Happy Arbor Day                          | 1  |
|                                                | Happy birthday to EU Birds Directive     | 1  |
|                                                | Happy Earth Day                          | 1  |
|                                                | Happy Easter                             | 1  |
|                                                | Happy Facebook Friends day               | 1  |
|                                                | Happy holidays                           | 1  |
|                                                | Happy international beaver day           | 1  |
|                                                | Happy International Day of Forests       | 1  |
|                                                | Happy International Polar Bear Day       | 1  |
|                                                | Happy International Women's Day          | 1  |
|                                                | Happy National Nebraska Day              | 1  |
|                                                | Happy National Pizza Day!                | 1  |
|                                                | Happy new year                           | 1  |
|                                                | Happy Valentine's day wish               | 1  |
|                                                | National Park Week                       | 1  |
|                                                | Native American Heritage Month           | 1  |
|                                                | Opening Day                              | 1  |
|                                                | Valentine's Day break-up card to plastic | 3  |
|                                                | Valentine's Day post                     | 2  |
|                                                | Women in Science Day                     | 1  |
|                                                | Women's History Month                    | 3  |
|                                                | World Wetlands Day                       | 4  |
| World Whale Day                                | 1                                        |    |
| World Wildlife Day                             | 3                                        |    |
| Considerate post about sensitive topic         | Heartfelt message after terrorist attack | 1  |
|                                                | Obituary message influential person      | 1  |
| Donations/fundraising                          | Asking for donations                     | 19 |
|                                                | Donation deal                            | 3  |
|                                                | External donation link                   | 1  |
|                                                | Highlighting advantages of investing     | 5  |
|                                                | NWF is supporting NWF - fundraiser       | 10 |
|                                                | Selling 'green' t-shirts                 | 1  |
|                                                | Selling jewelrey for the cause           | 1  |
| Encouraging/engaging the audience              | Action Alert                             | 2  |
|                                                | Attention-grabbing/controversial stunt   | 17 |

|  |                                               |    |
|--|-----------------------------------------------|----|
|  | Attention-grabbing/engaging use of emoji      | 14 |
|  | Challenge friends                             | 3  |
|  | Chance to meet activists                      | 1  |
|  | COMPETITION TIME                              | 2  |
|  | Congratulations to prize-winner               | 1  |
|  | Created an app                                | 1  |
|  | Creating a discussion                         | 6  |
|  | Dilemma/choice of 2 things                    | 1  |
|  | Disappointed? Because we are                  | 1  |
|  | Do you agree?                                 | 1  |
|  | Engaging questions                            | 32 |
|  | engaging young women in STEM education        | 1  |
|  | Enter here:                                   | 1  |
|  | Every \$10 equals one tree                    | 1  |
|  | Everyone can help                             | 5  |
|  | Everything you wanted to know, but didn't ask | 2  |
|  | Final chance                                  | 1  |
|  | 'Find out more...'                            | 4  |
|  | Find out their motivation:                    | 1  |
|  | Finding the will to act                       | 1  |
|  | Follow button                                 | 1  |
|  | Food for thought                              | 15 |
|  | For or against?                               | 1  |
|  | Free entry to a park                          | 1  |
|  | Free postage when buying                      | 1  |
|  | Free ticket to event                          | 6  |
|  | Get started here:                             | 1  |
|  | Good luck wish                                | 2  |
|  | Grand prize winner                            | 1  |
|  | 'Help at-risk wildlife'                       | 2  |
|  | Help bring nature back                        | 1  |
|  | Here's why                                    | 1  |
|  | Highlighting importance of ENGO work          | 19 |
|  | Highlighting what the world has to offer      | 10 |
|  | 'How you can help'                            | 46 |
|  | Ice cream vans in February?                   | 1  |
|  | Impact a person can have                      | 11 |
|  | Incentive/give-away                           | 17 |
|  | Inspirational content                         | 1  |
|  | Inspiring others to do the same               | 9  |
|  | Interactive experience                        | 3  |
|  | Inviting user comments                        | 19 |

|                                    |                                          |    |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----|
|                                    | 'Join the journey'                       | 3  |
|                                    | Join the movement                        | 10 |
|                                    | Join us!                                 | 8  |
|                                    | 'Learn more about...'                    | 25 |
|                                    | Learn more button                        | 8  |
|                                    | 'Learn more:'                            | 22 |
|                                    | Learning skills                          | 1  |
|                                    | Lessons from Martin Luther King Jr.      | 1  |
|                                    | Like page button                         | 1  |
|                                    | Live from Nestle's headquarters          | 1  |
|                                    | Looking for green entrepreneurs          | 1  |
|                                    | Looking forward to seeing you            | 1  |
|                                    | Looking forward to working together      | 2  |
|                                    | 'Many participated'                      | 1  |
|                                    | Meet the women:                          | 1  |
|                                    | Membership month                         | 2  |
|                                    | Message that people can change           | 8  |
|                                    | Powerful and important read              | 1  |
|                                    | Providing a template to write to someone | 4  |
|                                    | 'Read about'                             | 3  |
|                                    | 'Read more:'                             | 13 |
|                                    | Revealing results of challenge           | 2  |
|                                    | Save the world                           | 3  |
|                                    | See more here:                           | 1  |
|                                    | The time to act is now                   | 18 |
|                                    | Together we are strong                   | 7  |
|                                    | Triggering curiosity                     | 13 |
|                                    | We are needed                            | 6  |
|                                    | What will it take...                     | 2  |
|                                    | Win: a year of green energy              | 1  |
|                                    | Worth a read:                            | 1  |
| Events, expeditions and activities | "Buffalo unites us" conference           | 1  |
|                                    | Awesome Con                              | 1  |
|                                    | Broadcasting live                        | 4  |
|                                    | 'Citizen Science' Expedition             | 1  |
|                                    | Citizen-science projects                 | 1  |
|                                    | City Nature Challenge                    | 1  |
|                                    | Climate Change Forum                     | 1  |
|                                    | Early Childhood Health Outdoors program  | 1  |
|                                    | Earth Day Party                          | 1  |
|                                    | Earthwatch podcast                       | 7  |
|                                    | Eco-schools USA program                  | 1  |

|                                   |                                                |    |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|----|
|                                   | Expedition conserving wetlands and agriculture | 1  |
|                                   | Expedition marine mammals and predators        | 1  |
|                                   | Expedition sea otters and seagrass             | 1  |
|                                   | Expedition south african penguins              | 1  |
|                                   | Expedition tracking asiatic wild dogs          | 2  |
|                                   | Facebook watch                                 | 1  |
|                                   | Family fish camp                               | 1  |
|                                   | Gathering                                      | 1  |
|                                   | Graduate student research fellowships          | 1  |
|                                   | Grand experiment                               | 1  |
|                                   | Green career opportunities                     | 1  |
|                                   | Green contest with prize                       | 1  |
|                                   | Hosting a watch party                          | 3  |
|                                   | International Wildlife Conservation program    | 2  |
|                                   | International Wildlife Film Festival           | 1  |
|                                   | London Sustainability Exchange                 | 1  |
|                                   | Matching Gift Challenge                        | 5  |
|                                   | Meatless monday                                | 1  |
|                                   | Organizing a video call                        | 2  |
|                                   | Photo contest                                  | 2  |
|                                   | Plastic timer challenge                        | 7  |
|                                   | Plastic-free month experience                  | 1  |
|                                   | Postcode Lottery Green Challenge               | 1  |
|                                   | Q&A                                            | 3  |
|                                   | RecycleMania                                   | 1  |
|                                   | Refers to twitter for live-tweeting            | 2  |
|                                   | Science Summer Fellows Program                 | 1  |
|                                   | the first Tribal Buffalo Conservation Summit   | 1  |
|                                   | the Million Pollinator Garden Challenge        | 1  |
|                                   | Tribal Lands Partnerships Program              | 2  |
|                                   | Trips that make a difference                   | 1  |
|                                   | Urban wildlife program                         | 1  |
|                                   | Virgin London Marathon                         | 1  |
|                                   | virtual EcoCareers Conference                  | 3  |
|                                   | Virtual reality                                | 1  |
|                                   | Women in Conservation Leadership Summit        | 1  |
| Focus on seriousness of situation | Climate change catastrophe                     | 2  |
|                                   | Climate change effects                         | 49 |
|                                   | 'Climate Chaos is Coming'                      | 3  |
|                                   | Crucial stage in the fight                     | 1  |

|                                   |                                       |     |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----|
|                                   | Deadly serious                        | 1   |
|                                   | Determination                         | 19  |
|                                   | Emergency                             | 5   |
|                                   | Feared the worst                      | 1   |
|                                   | Future is in trouble                  | 1   |
|                                   | Legal actions                         | 13  |
|                                   | Loud and clear message                | 3   |
|                                   | Needing people to listen              | 5   |
|                                   | Our future is not an April Fools joke | 1   |
|                                   | Recycling isn't enough                | 5   |
|                                   | Risks that come with efforts          | 2   |
|                                   | Sad picture                           | 9   |
|                                   | Sad tone                              | 6   |
|                                   | Serious/formal tone                   | 126 |
|                                   | Shocking facts                        | 35  |
|                                   | Shocking footage                      | 2   |
|                                   | Shocking headline                     | 9   |
|                                   | Shocking picture                      | 13  |
|                                   | There's only so much we can take      | 1   |
|                                   | Things we wish were April Fools jokes | 1   |
|                                   | Time limit                            | 4   |
|                                   | Toxic relationship                    | 1   |
|                                   | Urgency                               | 25  |
|                                   | Use of sad/mad/negative emoji         | 9   |
|                                   | Warning                               | 27  |
|                                   | 'We can't go on like this'            | 1   |
| Personal focus/experience         | Experience on expedition              | 9   |
|                                   | Exploring experience                  | 5   |
|                                   | Focus on one individual               | 35  |
|                                   | Looking forward to seeing you         | 1   |
|                                   | Looking forward to working together   | 2   |
|                                   | Making a personal link                | 13  |
|                                   | Making sacrifices                     | 6   |
|                                   | People before profit                  | 1   |
|                                   | People's legacy                       | 2   |
|                                   | Personal consequences to many people  | 13  |
|                                   | Personal story                        | 28  |
|                                   | Sharing experiences                   | 1   |
|                                   | Spirituality and science              | 1   |
| Focus on seriousness of situation | 'Ambitious and innovative'            | 1   |
|                                   | Brave, bold, brilliant people         | 1   |
|                                   | Celebrate pokemon day                 | 2   |
|                                   | Colorful                              | 2   |

|                              |                                     |    |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----|
|                              | Enthusiastic tone                   | 87 |
|                              | Funny cartoon                       | 3  |
|                              | Funny headline                      | 4  |
|                              | Funny text                          | 2  |
|                              | Funny twist on popular poem         | 3  |
|                              | Have a good weekend                 | 1  |
|                              | Humorous twist                      | 7  |
|                              | Including a joke                    | 3  |
|                              | Informal/personal tone              | 90 |
|                              | it's not me, it's you               | 1  |
|                              | Kayaktivists                        | 1  |
|                              | Lighthearted/fun post               | 9  |
|                              | Meme                                | 3  |
|                              | Moment of Zen                       | 1  |
|                              | Popular culture reference           | 8  |
|                              | Pun                                 | 5  |
|                              | Sarcasm                             | 4  |
|                              | The Muppets                         | 1  |
|                              | Use of positive/neutral emoji       | 57 |
|                              | Use of slang                        | 3  |
| Post in a different language | Post in Finnish                     | 1  |
|                              | Post in French                      | 1  |
|                              | Post in Portugese                   | 2  |
|                              | Post in Welsh                       | 1  |
| Promotions                   | Promotes a product                  | 1  |
|                              | Promoting a documentary             | 6  |
|                              | Promoting a podcast                 | 1  |
|                              | Promoting an organized event        | 43 |
|                              | Promoting book 'Love Bees'          | 1  |
|                              | Promoting 'Ecotricity'              | 1  |
|                              | Promoting expeditions               | 6  |
|                              | Promoting 'Good Energy'             | 1  |
|                              | Promoting ITV documentary broadcast | 1  |
|                              | Promoting less meat & dairy         | 6  |
|                              | Promoting other's expeditions       | 1  |
|                              | Promoting secondhand stores         | 1  |
|                              | Promoting Teemill store             | 1  |
|                              | Promoting unique experience         | 5  |
|                              | Promotion of upcoming documentary   | 2  |
| Surprise/unexpected element  | Interesting/unexpected fact         | 21 |
|                              | PS message                          | 4  |
|                              | Unexpected findings                 | 5  |
|                              | Unnatural                           | 1  |

|                |                                  |    |
|----------------|----------------------------------|----|
|                | Unpleasantly surprised           | 2  |
| Use of hashtag | #100dias of Bolsonaro government | 1  |
|                | #4TheDelaware                    | 1  |
|                | #beecounted                      | 1  |
|                | #BigGardenBirdWatch              | 1  |
|                | #breakfree                       | 2  |
|                | #BreakFreeFromPlastic            | 28 |
|                | #CleanAirNow                     | 2  |
|                | #ClimateActionPlan               | 8  |
|                | #ClimateEmergency                | 4  |
|                | #ClimateGroundswell              | 1  |
|                | #CocoaCountdown                  | 1  |
|                | #DrasticOnPlastic                | 11 |
|                | #Ecohour                         | 1  |
|                | #ExtinctionRebellion             | 1  |
|                | #FindYourPark                    | 1  |
|                | #fridaysforfuture                | 6  |
|                | #GameOfThrones                   | 1  |
|                | #GivingTuesday                   | 3  |
|                | #InternationalForestDay          | 2  |
|                | #KeepItConnected                 | 1  |
|                | #LetCommunitiesDecide            | 1  |
|                | #MoreTreesPlease                 | 1  |
|                | #NationalGardeningDay            | 1  |
|                | #NationalWildlifeWeek            | 1  |
|                | #NOfactoryfarms                  | 1  |
|                | #NoThirdRunway                   | 1  |
|                | #OceanChallenge                  | 1  |
|                | #peoplepower                     | 1  |
|                | #PeopleVsOil                     | 2  |
|                | #planetorplastic                 | 1  |
|                | #PlasticSucks                    | 1  |
|                | #pollination                     | 1  |
|                | #RestoreTheCoast                 | 1  |
|                | #SaveLWCF                        | 2  |
|                | #SavetheAmazon                   | 8  |
|                | #SaveVistula                     | 1  |
|                | #SolarPower                      | 1  |
|                | #StudentStrike4Climate           | 2  |
|                | #Trees4Wildlife                  | 4  |
|                | #VoteForClimate                  | 1  |
|                | #WednesdayWisdom                 | 1  |
|                | #WorldWaterDay                   | 2  |

|                                         |                                           |                                          |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
|                                         | #WorldWetlandsDay                         | 1                                        |
| Use of catchphrases                     | "Activism works, so act!"                 | 2                                        |
|                                         | "Stories, not confrontation"              | 1                                        |
|                                         | Actions speak louder than words           | 3                                        |
|                                         | Anything is possible                      | 1                                        |
|                                         | Chance for change                         | 1                                        |
|                                         | Change takes time                         | 3                                        |
|                                         | Emotional quote                           | 12                                       |
|                                         | Motivational quote/story                  | 26                                       |
|                                         | No Forests No Life                        | 5                                        |
|                                         | No forests, no water, no climate, no food | 1                                        |
|                                         | Not a joke                                | 1                                        |
|                                         | 'NOW!'                                    | 7                                        |
|                                         | People before profit                      | 1                                        |
|                                         | Quote about loving mountains              | 1                                        |
|                                         | Quote about spirituality                  | 1                                        |
|                                         | Quote by Executive Director               | 1                                        |
|                                         | Quote by Greta Thunberg                   | 5                                        |
|                                         | Quote by NWF CEO & President              | 7                                        |
|                                         | Quoting the constitution                  | 1                                        |
|                                         | Visuals, art or media product             | Art visualization related to ENGO issues |
| Before and after photo (negative)       |                                           | 1                                        |
| Before and after photo (positive)       |                                           | 1                                        |
| Cartoon in post                         |                                           | 7                                        |
| Creation of a song                      |                                           | 1                                        |
| Documentary: Climate Change - The Facts |                                           | 8                                        |
| Episode of 'We Can Solve This'          |                                           | 1                                        |
| Film about Earthwatch included          |                                           | 1                                        |
| Film on Trust ownership                 |                                           | 1                                        |
| Graph included                          |                                           | 3                                        |
| Informational cartoon/drawing           |                                           | 3                                        |
| In-post video                           |                                           | 62                                       |
| Multiple pictures/photoset              |                                           | 15                                       |
| New short film: What if                 |                                           | 1                                        |
| Picture of Alex Monroe                  |                                           | 1                                        |
| Picture of animal                       |                                           | 186                                      |
| Picture of available products           |                                           | 1                                        |
| Picture of David Attenborough           |                                           | 6                                        |
| Picture of excess plastic               |                                           | 11                                       |
| Picture of Greta Thunberg               |                                           | 3                                        |
| Picture of Indigenous Person            | 5                                         |                                          |
| Picture of landscape                    | 33                                        |                                          |
| Picture of people                       | 30                                        |                                          |

|                           |                                 |                                              |     |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----|
|                           |                                 | Picture of Phil Kingston                     | 1   |
|                           |                                 | Picture of 'Plastic monster'                 | 5   |
|                           |                                 | Picture of Poet Magero                       | 1   |
|                           |                                 | Picture of politician                        | 1   |
|                           |                                 | Picture of problem                           | 16  |
|                           |                                 | Picture of protesters                        | 24  |
|                           |                                 | Picture of Richard Sherley (researcher)      | 1   |
|                           |                                 | Picture of top 9 #DrasticOnPlastic offenders | 1   |
|                           |                                 | Picture of Trump                             | 2   |
|                           |                                 | Picture of underwater life                   | 3   |
|                           |                                 | Picture of unusual weather                   | 1   |
|                           |                                 | Picture of volunteer                         | 6   |
|                           |                                 | Picture of Wallace Smith Broecker            | 1   |
|                           |                                 | Picture of water surface                     | 13  |
|                           |                                 | Picture of windmills                         | 4   |
|                           |                                 | Picture with Game of Thrones visual          | 1   |
|                           |                                 | Picture with global warming symbolism        | 11  |
|                           |                                 | Picture with mascotte                        | 2   |
|                           |                                 | Picture with text                            | 4   |
|                           |                                 | Ranger Rick Mags                             | 1   |
|                           |                                 | Ranger Rick Mags magazine                    | 1   |
|                           |                                 | Short film                                   | 2   |
|                           |                                 | Sneak peek of a video                        | 1   |
|                           |                                 | The Age of Stupid film                       | 1   |
|                           |                                 | Video that will run during Super Bowl        | 1   |
|                           |                                 | Visualizing joint day-to-day struggles       | 1   |
|                           |                                 | Visually showing pollution                   | 3   |
| Information dissemination | Additional/detailed information | (with permission!)                           | 1   |
|                           |                                 | About this website button                    | 31  |
|                           |                                 | Credits of picture included                  | 4   |
|                           |                                 | Disclaimer                                   | 1   |
|                           |                                 | Information icon included                    | 172 |
|                           |                                 | Informative elements in text                 | 39  |
|                           |                                 | Informs that t&c's apply                     | 2   |
|                           |                                 | More info:                                   | 2   |
|                           |                                 | New findings                                 | 31  |
|                           |                                 | New initiatives                              | 28  |
|                           |                                 | Numbers/stats                                | 19  |
|                           |                                 | Press release                                | 1   |
|                           |                                 | Promise of updates                           | 3   |
|                           |                                 | Reasons why something is important           | 25  |
|                           |                                 | Refers to a report                           | 1   |

|                                         |                                                   |    |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|----|
|                                         | Repetition of a previous post                     | 31 |
|                                         | Research efforts and results                      | 58 |
|                                         | What will happen with your money                  | 1  |
| Concrete actions                        | Confronting with facts/acts/reality               | 12 |
|                                         | Conservation program by NWF                       | 1  |
|                                         | Created an app                                    | 1  |
|                                         | Interrupting a meeting                            | 1  |
|                                         | Legal actions                                     | 13 |
|                                         | Live from Nestle's headquarters                   | 1  |
|                                         | Marching                                          | 1  |
|                                         | Preventing negative regulations                   | 7  |
|                                         | Removing barriers                                 | 1  |
|                                         | Restoration                                       | 1  |
|                                         | See you in court, Shell.                          | 1  |
| Highlighting campaigns/focus            | Focus on next generation                          | 19 |
|                                         | Overthrowing the system                           | 1  |
|                                         | Protect the Great Barrier Reef                    | 1  |
|                                         | Protecting wild peatlands                         | 3  |
|                                         | Protective laws                                   | 11 |
|                                         | Tree campaign                                     | 1  |
| Highlighting/reflecting on achievements | First-time occurrence/achievement                 | 6  |
|                                         | Highlighting achievements                         | 17 |
|                                         | Historic victory                                  | 1  |
|                                         | National Conservation Achievement Award recipient | 1  |
|                                         | Natural Resources Management act                  | 2  |
|                                         | Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act       | 1  |
|                                         | Policy impact                                     | 4  |
|                                         | Recap of protests                                 | 4  |
|                                         | Reflecting on protests and change                 | 5  |
| Keeping audience informed               | Focus on importance of education                  | 6  |
|                                         | ICYMI - update                                    | 4  |
|                                         | Increased awareness                               | 9  |
|                                         | Influence of teachers                             | 1  |
|                                         | Info about future plans                           | 1  |
|                                         | Issue brief                                       | 1  |
|                                         | 'Keep in the know'                                | 1  |
|                                         | Keeping audience updated                          | 5  |
|                                         | Pointing out a trend over time                    | 8  |
|                                         | Promise of updates                                | 3  |
| Link beyond FB-post                     | Blogpost                                          | 25 |
|                                         | Link to a different Facebook page                 | 55 |
|                                         | Link to a petition                                | 73 |

|                                        |                                             |     |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----|
|                                        | Link to a product                           | 1   |
|                                        | Link to contest for NWF                     | 1   |
|                                        | Link to get in touch w MP                   | 2   |
|                                        | Link to own twitter account                 | 2   |
|                                        | Link to own website                         | 6   |
|                                        | Link to someone's instagram page            | 1   |
|                                        | Links to a youtube video                    | 3   |
|                                        | Links to an external source video           | 1   |
|                                        | Links to company website                    | 1   |
|                                        | Links to event page                         | 25  |
|                                        | Links to external source                    | 188 |
|                                        | Links to video on website                   | 2   |
|                                        | Refers to informative article               | 278 |
| (Public) opinion                       | Asking opinion of audience                  | 1   |
|                                        | Opinion segment                             | 3   |
|                                        | Wildlife Migration Poll                     | 1   |
| Political or legal occurrences/changes | Climate politics                            | 10  |
|                                        | Conservation, Management and Recreation Act | 1   |
|                                        | Elections                                   | 1   |
|                                        | Energy dominance policy                     | 1   |
|                                        | Holding a hearing                           | 3   |
|                                        | House Committee on Foreign Affairs          | 1   |
|                                        | New legislation                             | 2   |
|                                        | Plastic pollution bill                      | 2   |
| Reference to problem or issue          | Amazon under attack                         | 1   |
|                                        | Aviation effects                            | 8   |
|                                        | Consumption issue                           | 1   |
|                                        | Far too reliant on plastic                  | 2   |
|                                        | Fast fashion issue                          | 1   |
|                                        | Focus on air pollution                      | 3   |
|                                        | Focus on biodiversity                       | 6   |
|                                        | Focus on ocean health                       | 18  |
|                                        | Focus on plastic pollution                  | 48  |
|                                        | Food wrappers and containers                | 1   |
|                                        | Formulating/stating a specific problem      | 11  |
|                                        | Microplastics                               | 2   |
|                                        | Plastic nasties                             | 1   |
|                                        | Plastic pollution                           | 2   |
|                                        | Pointless plastic                           | 4   |
|                                        | Single-use plastic issue                    | 17  |
|                                        | Unnecessary plastic packaging               | 1   |
|                                        | Warming                                     | 1   |

|                                 |                                                      |                              |    |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|----|
| Results of environmental issues | (Possible) future consequences                       | 38                           |    |
|                                 | (Possible) irreversible damage                       | 2                            |    |
|                                 | 21 degrees in February                               | 1                            |    |
|                                 | Abnormally warm waters                               | 1                            |    |
|                                 | Insect extinction                                    | 2                            |    |
|                                 | Nature adapting to climate change                    | 2                            |    |
|                                 | Pollution effects                                    | 8                            |    |
|                                 | Predictions                                          | 2                            |    |
|                                 | Small signs of climate change                        | 2                            |    |
|                                 | Winter heatwave                                      | 1                            |    |
| Specific/local bad examples     | Air pollution hot-spots                              | 1                            |    |
|                                 | Air quality in Derby                                 | 1                            |    |
|                                 | Brexit consequences                                  | 3                            |    |
|                                 | Consequences of dropping Clean Water Act protections | 1                            |    |
|                                 | Environmental throwbacks                             | 1                            |    |
|                                 | First city devastated by climate change              | 1                            |    |
|                                 | Fossil fuel extraction effects                       | 3                            |    |
|                                 | Fracking earthquakes: the essential guide            | 1                            |    |
|                                 | Fracking effects                                     | 1                            |    |
|                                 | Harming children                                     | 2                            |    |
|                                 | Limiting water resources                             | 1                            |    |
|                                 | Post-apocalyptic state of...                         | 1                            |    |
|                                 | Specific negative act by company                     | 13                           |    |
|                                 | Specific negative consequence example 'Whale Jail'   | 36                           |    |
| Specific/local good examples    | 2616 Certified wildlife habitats                     | 1                            |    |
|                                 | 'From poachers to protectors'                        | 1                            |    |
|                                 | Park bench made of plastic                           | 1                            |    |
|                                 | Specific success example                             | 17                           |    |
|                                 | Steady coal decline                                  | 1                            |    |
|                                 | Top 10 Cities for Wildlife                           | 1                            |    |
|                                 | WILD act through congress                            | 1                            |    |
| Voicing/explaining concerns     | Concerns about animal habitats                       | 20                           |    |
|                                 | Concerns about animal population/endangerment        | 30                           |    |
|                                 | Concerns about climate change                        | 31                           |    |
|                                 | Concerns about deforestation                         | 5                            |    |
|                                 | Concerns about flora                                 | 1                            |    |
|                                 | Concerns about pollution                             | 18                           |    |
|                                 | Concerns for national security                       | 1                            |    |
| Interactivity                   | Directly addressing certain people                   | Addressing a company         | 15 |
|                                 |                                                      | Addressing high school girls | 2  |
|                                 |                                                      | Addressing parents/adults    | 2  |

|                                        |                                    |    |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------|----|
|                                        | Addressing people's behavior       | 14 |
|                                        | Addressing politicians             | 30 |
|                                        | Addressing the government          | 46 |
|                                        | Addressing the media               | 1  |
|                                        | Bad consequences of human behavior | 7  |
| Encouraging to do/asking for something | Activity for audience              | 24 |
|                                        | Asking for donations               | 19 |
|                                        | Asking opinion of audience         | 1  |
|                                        | Asking to back a bill              | 1  |
|                                        | Asking to sign a petition          | 73 |
|                                        | Asking to vote to get an award     | 1  |
|                                        | Be a friend of the earth           | 1  |
|                                        | Become a forest defender           | 1  |
|                                        | Break-up with single-use plastic   | 5  |
|                                        | Call for support                   | 45 |
|                                        | Call to stop doing something       | 12 |
|                                        | Can never do enough                | 4  |
|                                        | Emphasizes the need for action     | 55 |
|                                        | Empowering choice of words         | 1  |
|                                        | Empowering people to effect change | 1  |
|                                        | Encourages to address companies    | 31 |
|                                        | Encourages to admit confusion      | 1  |
|                                        | Encourages to 'name and shame'     | 1  |
|                                        | Encourages to share                | 21 |
|                                        | Encourages to tag a person         | 4  |
|                                        | Encourages to take action          | 90 |
|                                        | Encourages to watch                | 1  |
|                                        | Encouraging to become informed     | 72 |
|                                        | Encouraging to become involved     | 40 |
|                                        | Encouraging to click article       | 9  |
|                                        | Encouraging to follow someone      | 2  |
|                                        | Encouraging to participate/engage  | 77 |
|                                        | Encouraging to spread the word     | 8  |
|                                        | Fundraiser in post                 | 17 |
|                                        | Interactive experience             | 3  |
|                                        | Let's make sure they get it right  | 1  |
|                                        | Let's stand with them              | 2  |
|                                        | Like if you agree                  | 1  |
|                                        | Like this post                     | 1  |
|                                        | Listen to podcast                  | 1  |
|                                        | Listen to science                  | 3  |
|                                        | Listen to spoken poetry            | 1  |
|                                        | Please give                        | 2  |

|                           |                                                    |    |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|----|
|                           | Read our statement                                 | 1  |
|                           | Register today                                     | 2  |
|                           | Send message button                                | 1  |
|                           | Share if you agree                                 | 6  |
|                           | Share questions                                    | 1  |
|                           | Share the buzz                                     | 1  |
|                           | Show that you care                                 | 6  |
|                           | Sign up for event                                  | 5  |
|                           | Sign up for Take Climate Action community          | 1  |
|                           | 'Sponsor Molly here'                               | 1  |
|                           | 'Stand with...'                                    | 1  |
|                           | Stating/addressing people's responsibility         | 22 |
|                           | 'Watch alert'                                      | 2  |
|                           | Watch Countryfile on BBC                           | 2  |
|                           | 'Watch it live!'                                   | 2  |
|                           | Watch online                                       | 1  |
|                           | Watch this video                                   | 2  |
|                           | Watch video with friends                           | 4  |
| Guidance                  | Earthwatch's Sustainable Holiday Gift-Giving Guide | 1  |
|                           | Guidance in how to change                          | 1  |
|                           | How to stop something                              | 1  |
|                           | 'How you can help'                                 | 46 |
|                           | Importance of mentorship                           | 1  |
|                           | Including directions                               | 2  |
|                           | Offering training                                  | 1  |
|                           | Room-by-room guide                                 | 1  |
|                           | Sharing tips                                       | 3  |
|                           | Wildlife Guide                                     | 1  |
| Solutions and suggestions | Alternative methods/solutions                      | 14 |
|                           | Ban on fossil fuel sport sponsorship               | 1  |
|                           | Be strong against fracking industry                | 2  |
|                           | Bee action plan                                    | 1  |
|                           | Climate solutions: Agriculture & Land-use          | 1  |
|                           | Climate solutions: infrastructure                  | 1  |
|                           | Climate solutions: international justice           | 1  |
|                           | Climate solutions: power                           | 1  |
|                           | Climate solutions: the amazon rainforest           | 1  |
|                           | Climate solutions: transport                       | 2  |
|                           | Cut out everyday plastic                           | 4  |
|                           | Easily and safely helping wildlife during winter   | 1  |
|                           | Focus on solution/hope                             | 83 |

|                                   |                                                        |    |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|----|
|                                   | Live with less plastic                                 | 4  |
|                                   | Plastic bag fees or bans                               | 2  |
|                                   | Plastic-free alternative/option                        | 1  |
|                                   | Proposal/ideas                                         | 8  |
|                                   | Reusable water bottles                                 | 1  |
|                                   | Solar energy/renewables                                | 5  |
|                                   | Suggested improvements company                         | 1  |
|                                   | Suggestion to appreciate nature                        | 21 |
|                                   | Suggestions for governmental change                    | 24 |
|                                   | Suggestions for personal improvement                   | 38 |
|                                   | Sustainability                                         | 9  |
|                                   | Turnin the Tide on Plastic Pollution                   | 1  |
| Voicing appreciation/gratefulness | Acknowledging important people from the past           | 1  |
|                                   | Appreciating protest signs                             | 1  |
|                                   | Appreciation for John Dingell                          | 3  |
|                                   | Appreciation for small-scale initiatives               | 1  |
|                                   | Appreciation of oceans                                 | 12 |
|                                   | General appreciation/thank you post                    | 2  |
|                                   | Green heroes                                           | 1  |
|                                   | Proud of FOE                                           | 1  |
|                                   | Proud to be part of Great Lakes Conservation Coalition | 2  |
|                                   | Scientist appreciation                                 | 2  |
|                                   | Thanking a senator                                     | 1  |
|                                   | Thanking Adventure Journal                             | 6  |
|                                   | Thanking an individual for their efforts               | 1  |
|                                   | Thanking Austin for efforts                            | 1  |
|                                   | Thanking donator                                       | 1  |
|                                   | Thanking Outside Magazine                              | 1  |
|                                   | Thanking partners                                      | 1  |
|                                   | Thanking women scientists                              | 1  |
|                                   | Voicing admiration                                     | 1  |
|                                   | Volunteer appreciation                                 | 11 |
| Voicing support                   | Support for Bernie Sanders                             | 1  |
|                                   | support for climate activist                           | 12 |
|                                   | Support for politician                                 | 2  |
|                                   | Supporting a government initiative                     | 4  |
|                                   | Supporting specific groups                             | 15 |
|                                   | Supporting women in science                            | 16 |