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**APPLYING THE POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA TO GENERATE AWARENESS AND  
SUPPORT FOR SYMPHONY ORCHESTRAS AMONG YOUNGER TARGET  
MARKETS**

by  
Gina M. Bittner

A Thesis

Submitted to the Department of Public Relations & Advertising  
College of Communication  
In partial fulfillment of the requirement  
For the degree of  
Master of Arts  
at Rowan University  
September 13, 2011

Thesis Chair: Joseph Basso, Ph.D.

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## **Dedication**

*To paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, all that I am, or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother and father.*

*This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Virginia and Stephen Bittner. Without your love, encouragement and relentless support, my degree would be but a dream.*

## **Acknowledgments**

*My family and friends are an integral part of my life, and therefore, the completion of my degree. Thank you so very much for your support and affection throughout this process, especially my brother, John, my love, Anthony, and my aunt and uncle Mary Nell and George Berry.*

## **Abstract**

Gina Bittner

APPLYING THE POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA TO GENERATE AWARENESS AND  
SUPPORT FOR SYMPHONY ORCHESTRAS AMONGE YOUNGER TARGET MARKETS

2011/12

Professor Joseph Basso, Ph.D.  
Master of Arts in Public Relations

The purposes of this exploratory investigation were to (a) provide insight to communication managers at symphony orchestras into how social media can be used in their marketing efforts and to (b) ascertain how to effectively use social media as a strategy to attract younger demographic groups (ages 19-35). The researcher distributed an online survey to communication professionals at U.S. symphony orchestras (n=220) selected at random from the 2010 Musical America Directory and conducted in-depth interviews with members of the 19 to 35 age group in the southern New Jersey area. The average survey responder demonstrated interest in social media, but did not have the budget and/or staff to dedicate time to the effort including writing a social media communication plan. In-depth interviews revealed younger demographic members do use social media to access information more than any other medium. Implications for effectively and efficiently engaging younger audience members and ,therefore, more audience members are discussed and suggested.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

For symphony orchestras across the country, developing a relationship with the younger demographic group is vital to long term success as well as increasing the size of the audience and the broad support for the orchestra. In the past, symphony orchestras only reached audience members and customers by spending money on traditional channels such as flyers, brochures and other expensive advertising strategies. While these techniques remain somewhat effective today, communication managers now have an entire virtual social networking world at their disposal.

Social media opens the door for opportunities for symphony orchestras to reach younger patrons, therefore generating awareness and support for the organization among these younger target markets.

### **Statement of Problems**

- 1.) Symphony orchestras garner a majority of their support- both financially and through attendance- among older demographic groups. They struggle with reaching the 19-35 age group.
- 2.) Symphony orchestras focus a majority of their marketing on large donations and gifts from older demographic groups rather than smaller gifts from younger demographic groups.
- 3.) Traditional methods for marketing symphony orchestras are cost prohibitive and have a negative effect or none at all on the organization's Return on Investment, Return on Advertising Spent, and Cost Per Acquisition.

- 4.) Traditional methods for marketing symphony orchestras are ineffective among younger demographic groups.
- 5.) Symphony orchestras are dependent on promotional activities to increase support and audience involvement.
- 6.) Symphony orchestras are ill equipped to effectively use social media to reach younger audiences.

### **Significance of the Problems**

Art organizations such as symphony orchestras compete among each other for audiences and philanthropic support. A National Endowment for the Arts study showed that there are currently more than 1,200 symphony orchestras, 600 youth orchestras and approximately 120 opera companies in the United States. Additionally, in the last 20 years, the number of performing arts groups has risen to an all-time high. The study also showed that in 2004, about 44 percent of the income generated by American arts organizations came from sales or the box office (Cowen). The study underscored the importance of promoting an interest in the organization and to do so in a variety of ways. Research indicates that traditional methods of promotions and marketing tend to attract older demographic groups who report having fewer members. While all support is valuable, it is important for art organizations to reach younger audiences. The researcher attempted to analyze the impact that social media and networking has on attracting younger audiences.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The researcher attempted to provide insight to communication managers at symphony orchestras into how social media can be used in their marketing efforts. In addition, the researcher attempted to ascertain how to effectively use social media as a strategy to attract younger demographic groups. The researcher operated under the assumption that by increasing access and communication with this demographic, a corresponding interest in, and support of, the orchestras can be secured.

## **Hypotheses**

- 1.) The majority of marketing activities employed by symphony orchestras are directed toward older demographic groups.
- 2.) Younger demographic groups tend to be persuaded more by information that appears on social media and through word-of-mouth rather than traditional media.
- 3.) The majority of communication managers working for symphony orchestras find it difficult to generate support among younger demographic groups.
- 4.) The majority of communication managers working for symphony orchestras believe that it is important to expand their reach into younger audiences to generate support for their orchestra for audience development and the longevity of audience member interest and support.

## **Limitations**

The researcher only studied a younger demographic group, ages 19 to 35. The researcher only surveyed professional symphony orchestras during original data collection. The data collection did not include amateur symphony orchestras.

## **Terminology**

**Blog (Weblog)**- Short for Weblog. An online journal of commentary, photos and other content maintained regularly by a person or people. Usually blogs are focused on one or a few topics.

**Communication Managers**- An organization's employee who handles public relations or other communications in the company.

**Facebook**- A free social networking Website. It creates a forum for Users to network and connect with neighbors, classmates, co-workers and family through a messaging wall, direct messages or games. Users can create a profile and add pictures to update their friends on their lives.

**Flickr**- Website that allows users to post and share photographs and videos.

**LinkedIn**- Like Facebook, LinkedIn allows users to create a profile and network, however it is used for professional networking.

**Micro-blogging**- Micro-blogging is the shorter version of blogging. Micro-bloggers publish brief updates through words, video and more. Twitter is a form of micro-blogging.

**MySpace**- Website where users can create a profile, blog, interact with friends, sample music and more. In 2011, the site became geared more towards music.

**Podcast-** Usually a series of digital audio or video media files made available for download.

**Social Media-** Social media is information content created by people using highly accessible and scalable publishing technologies. It is intended to facilitate communications, influence interaction between peers and with public audiences. This is typically done via the Internet and mobile communications networks. The term most often refers to activities that integrate technology, telecommunications and social interaction and the construction of words, pictures, videos and audio. This interaction, and the manner in which information is presented, depends on the varied perspectives and "building" of shared meaning among communities, as people share their stories and experiences (Van Bree, *Orchestras and New Media*, IV).

**Social Networking-** A social network service focuses on building online communities of people who share interests and/or activities or who are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others. Most social network services are Web based and provide a variety of ways for users to interact, such as e-mail and instant messaging services (Van Bree, *Orchestras and New Media*, IV).

**Twitter-** A social networking and micro-blogging service that allows users to send and read other users' updates known as tweets. Tweets are text-based posts of up to 140 characters in length. (Van Bree, *Orchestras and New Media*, V).

**Wikipedia-** A free, Web based encyclopedia. Its articles can be edited by its visitors.

**Word-of-mouth-** Word-of-mouth marketing, which encompasses a variety of subcategories, including buzz, blog, viral, grassroots, cause influencers and social media

marketing, as well as ambassador programs, work with consumer-generated media and more, can be highly valued by product marketers. Because of the personal nature of the communications between individuals, it is believed that product information communicated in this way has an added layer of credibility (Van Bree, *Orchestras and New Media*, VI).

**Yelp-** Yelp is a social networking, user review, and local search Web site. It provides online local search capabilities and combines local reviews and social networking functionality to create a local online community. Yelp sites have listings for businesses throughout the United States and Canada and accept reviews of any business or service (Van Bree, *Orchestras and New Media*, VI).

**YouTube-** A video sharing Website where users can upload, view and share video clips for free.



## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

Professional orchestras rely heavily on philanthropic organizations and individual contributions for their operating capital. The current recession has increased the ongoing challenge for professional orchestras to secure adequate financial support to sustain operations and fulfill their organizational missions.

Even time-honored non-profits such as the Philadelphia Orchestra are beginning to accept what appears to be the new reality of a diminished and steadily declining support base. In an article discussing the effect of the current economy on orchestra related problems, author Aimee Picchi related that in January of 2010, the CEO for the Philadelphia Orchestra stated that bankruptcy may be inevitable with financial restructuring as a way of reorganizing. According to Picchi, the Philadelphia Orchestra is experiencing a declining attendance, filling only 62 percent of its seats in the 2009 season, down from 80 percent the previous year. Its endowment goal for 2009 was \$250 million, but it only raised \$112 million by November 2009 (Picchi). The Philadelphia Orchestra subsequently filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in 2011 (Dobrin).

Other formerly stable and prestigious orchestras are experiencing similar difficulties as well, with the Cleveland Orchestra experiencing a musician strike over a recent pay freeze and the New York Philharmonic reporting a record \$4.6 million deficit for 2009 (Picchi).

Recently the League of American Orchestras commissioned a study on the demographics of orchestra support in America. The Demographic Research Review was published in December of 2009 and gave insight on the evolution of today's support base for orchestras. The report indicates that all sources have been in general decline, some being precipitous. The following summarizes the demographic review results for participation:

- Overall classical music participation rates declined at a steady level between 1982 and 2008 from 12.8 percent of the population to 9.3 percent, representing a 27 percent decline in attendance (4).
- Unique classical music attendance (by individual) declined over 13 percent during this period, which relates to a 3.3 million decline in participation (4).
- Paid attendance declined by 8 percent (4).
- Losses occurred in almost all demographic cohorts studied (4).
- Further study indicated that rates of participation declined between subsequent generations (this challenged the widely held concept that people participated more as they aged particularly after reaching age 45) (4).
- Attendance declined as people aged within their generation as well (4).

Orchestras rely heavily on their philanthropic donors who represent an almost 40 percent share in operational support funds provided (Bank Of America, 56). In a 2008 study, published in early 2009, the Bank of America examined the current trends in philanthropic giving. While the economy was a factor in overall donations, the most common reasons for a person to stop donating were to be found elsewhere. BOA found that over 40 percent of those surveyed had stopped donating to one or more organizations in 2007 (55). The top reason, representing over 57 percent of respondents, was that donors no longer felt a connection with the organization ( 56).

## **Social Media and its Potential Impact**

Marshall McLuhan, a pioneer in explaining the impact of media, expressed in his seminal work Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man that communications media has “influence that is independent of its content”, and he used the maxim “The Media is the message” to make his point (McLuhan, 7). McLuhan’s theory is that using new media has personal and cultural consequences, which destroys old patterns and roles and creates new ones. The primary thrust in the media is the message school of thought is the mechanized age during the industrial revolution separated and fragmented mankind’s work patterns and relationships. Meanwhile the current age of automation is “more integral and decentralized,” and serves to destroy the mechanization (8). McLuhan sees the development of electronic media as a subliminal extension of the central nervous system (352). The overarching effect is to return mankind to a more associative and tribal status compared to its isolated mechanical status.

McLuhan predicted that electrification and automation would permit a multitude of tasks to be accomplished and an end to specialization. Using the comparison of light and power to information and knowledge, McLuhan points out that energy and information systems can be applied many ways. He claims that in an automated world, “energy and production have become fused with information and learning, enlightenment,” and that “marketing and consumption tend to become one with learning enlightenment and the intake of information” (350).

President Barack Obama’s 2008 presidential campaign demonstrates this concept of destruction and replacement through use of media. Apparently, the extensive use of

social networking in the campaign appeared as a method to inform the public about the campaign and to raise funds. Eventually the candidate's social network surpassed more traditional fundraising and information spreading methods. The social network eventually provided a primary means to communicate and manage key aspects of Obama's campaign effort.

Obama's campaign brought the world of politics into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with its widespread and strategic use of social media. In her book Yes We Did: An Inside Look At How Social Media Built the Obama Brand, Rahaf Harfoush described her three-month venture with the campaign's New Media and how social networking—the media—became the message of how Obama's campaign was conducted.

According to Harfoush, in order to effectively use social media to introduce and promote Obama, the campaign began to strategically build an online community.

First, the campaign tapped into existing networks: “The Obama team ensured that the tools they created would appeal to existing grassroots groups, like the Students for Barak Obama, who were already using the internet to organize independently” (Harfoush, 6).

The campaign then setup initiatives, such as a Donor Matching program, that reinforced its commitment to supporters and offered incentives to their friends and followers.

“Since the online community was new, the campaign had to make a concentrated effort to grow its membership and attract new donors and supporters. They did this by

offering appealing incentives, including the opportunity to sit down for a dinner with Barak Obama” (7).

The team also made an effort to add a personal touch when socializing with its online community, what Harfoush calls, “A tactic that differentiated them from their opponents” (7).

According to Harfoush, “For many organizations, this campaign has validated social media as a viable strategic tool. As new technologies continue to impact the way consumers engage with corporations, endless opportunities exist for smart executives who can leverage this new media to create meaningful relationships. The campaign’s use of blogging, social networks, text messaging, email and video heralds a new era of integrated digital communication that is simultaneously widespread and intimate” (xii).

Further consideration on the use of mass media to persuade targeted groups was offered by Wilbur Schramm, a founder of communications studies as an academic pursuit. In his work, Communications Studies In America Schramm provides several methods that were used with historical references.

In one work by Paul F. Lazerfield, Schramm cites how the study concluded the most effective persuasive attempts by mass media occur when the need is first aroused in the audience and then the audience is shown how to satisfy that need (Schramm, 100). In other words, there is definite strategy and presentation order in successful persuasion attempts when using media.

Further studies cited by Schramm include the 1953 study by Percy H. Tannenbaum wherein it was concluded that when presented with “cognitive

discrepancies” as a result of persuasive attempts the people would tend to seek “a solution that maximizes balance and consistency” and “a solution that minimizes a loss of consistency” with their internal beliefs (103).

According to Schramm people are more successfully influenced by messages that increase rather than reduce internal consistency. This also relates to discrepant behavior, which occurs when dissonance is created by the adoption of a change in attitude.

Schramm relates that when “persons commit themselves to a great deal of discrepant behavior, they tend to resist communication messages that oppose such behavior because that challenges their inner consistency” (103). This describes the difficulty organizations face when attempting to regain lost or disaffected supporters by traditional media campaigns.

### **McLuhan and Schramm Today**

Modern social media practitioners have found themselves in a new environment with little direct, formal study of this media. Based on recent observations and assessment of successful sites, David Scott, in his book The New Rules of Marketing & PR offers some insights about the more popular social media sites.

In considering best ways for organizations to “deliver information and ideas to a network of people interested in you and your products and services” (176), Scott feels that three ways predominate: friend-to-friend communication, groups, and applications (Scott, 232). In friend-to-friend, Scott relates that through posting meaningful information in a profile and then updating new information as it is acquired or changed interested parties are engaged by an “ongoing delivery of information from their circle of

friends” (233). In discussing groups Scott concludes that people generally join social media groups because they desire to stay informed about things that interest them, and to do so at their convenience (233).

According to Scott, the best way to keep people engaged in groups is by remembering why people join in the first place and continue to make “valuable information available” to group members (234). Scott also emphasizes using participative engagement to actively take part in the brand, allowing a more casual recommendation of the brand to their friends (234). He touches on the evolution of social networking in the creation of “new models for learning” including engaging textbook authors and guests and creating “virtual classrooms to supplement the physical ones.” Finally, applications are now ubiquitous tools for many on their personal communication devices and computers. These tools are readily available on social media sites and are used by thousands on a daily basis. Scott recommends that marketers consider applications that promote the products and services that their business clients are trying to sell (234). According to Scott, social media is a prime way that people “keep in touch with the people and organizations that are important to them” and an important marketing tool. Success, he predicts, in using the media results from “being a thought leader and developing information people want to absorb” (235).

Some professional marketers have attempted to quantify the impact of social media in order to gain some understanding of its effective implementation. In his work Social Media Metrics Jim Sterne describes the issue as “the market professional is tasked with capturing us with their powers of persuasion” (Sterne, 78). He measures this digital

influence by what is termed as social media effectiveness. The assumption being that this effectiveness quotient will be an indicator of the return on investment (ROI) that marketers need to justify the establishment and maintenance of social media marketing programs. (231).

### **The Internet and the Arts**

According to Audience 2.0: How Technology Influences Arts Participation, a study conducted by the National Endowment for the Arts in 2010, over 50 percent of Americans participate in the arts through the internet/ digital media (NEA, 26).

Additionally, the study found that 37 percent of U.S. adults use the Internet to participate in benchmark arts activities or participative engagement (33).

The use of social media by orchestras has not been extensively studied. However, a Dutch researcher, Mark Van Bree , conducted one of the few studies on the subject. Van Bree surmised that while use of social media by orchestras has not been examined in detail, it was widespread among orchestras, and orchestra managers routinely acknowledged the potential importance to their organizations (Van Bree, *Orchestras Survey*, 6). What was missing, according to Van Bree, was any coherent strategic plan to use the new media (6). Van Bree study concluded that the general absence of strategy and focus is reflected in the lack of policies, funding, and performance criteria concerning social media (6).



## **The Pervasiveness of Social Media**

Internet use is now so widespread, and social media use among students so prevalent, that it has started to be recognized as a distinct learning platform by some music educators.

In an article on music pedagogy and the Internet, Mikka Salavuo relates that social networking platforms are “used for creating connections, but also for sharing one's music, providing information as well as for learning. They can also introduce a student-centered approach to learning by offering ownership of the environment to its core users, and by creating a need to communicate and contribute to a community of practice” (Salavuo).

The potential need to own and participate in this core environment by students is also potentially shared by other interested participants according to John Shepherd in his work Whose Music. Use of social media is wide spread, and effectively used by a large number of younger internet users as an integral part of their everyday life. Shepherd makes the point that acceptance and sharing of music and its symbols is largely social in nature and similar to the spoken and written language. Additionally Shepherd maintains that attendance at a concert is a social event.

The case of public cultural experience is complex. Not only does a visit to the theatre, concert-hall, or discotheque presuppose the acceptance of certain cultural criteria (and hence a high degree of choice); it also involves participating in a the social event. The discotheque and concert-hall experience provide the extreme opposite examples of the influence of social event factors on the reception of a cultural artifact or event. For, whereas the concert-hall experience is social yet essentially intellectually private, immediately individual (at least until the interval), the discotheque experience is immediately communal and socially participatory... The concert-hall experience is essentially a private confirmation of bourgeois aesthetic values, to be reinforced, obliquely, in different media (dress, manners, conversation) before and after the event. In all these cases the social experience may completely outweigh the experience of the artifact or cultural act (253).

In this regard, social media can be thought of as a source of the referenced reinforcement of the public experience both before and after the event. Some consideration can also be given that mobile devices providing real time communication via social media may allow future reinforcement during the event, transforming the experience into more of a communal, socially participatory event that is attractive to those with alternative aesthetics than the bourgeois alluded to by Mr. Shepherd, potentially expanding the attendance base.

The power of such reinforcement at concert events has, in fact, been recognized by some marketing agencies. For example websites such as mymojo.com provide pre-concert information for various rock concerts, including insight and interaction about the musical sets to be performed by musicians at targeted concerts via websites with rich social media interaction. Then, according my mymojo.com, immediately prior to the concert, a web link is displayed in the hall which offers free downloads of the performing artists work for concert-goers. To access the download, the ticket holder sends a text message and receives a response with a link that becomes active the following day for a set time period to download the music. This effectively provides reinforcement before and after the event, enhanced by a time-delayed reward of free music to complete the experience. Mymojo.com's mission statement includes their goal of "managing, marketing, and monetizing the digital presence of talented individuals" (mymojo.com).

## **The Participatory Experience**

Social media provides a participatory experience among users. This makes it an ideal media to foster participatory engagement during a social event. Such an engagement has potential high value for arts organizations because it is virtually free.

In a study commissioned by the Wallace Foundation in 2009 titled Engaging Audiences, an exploration was made on the meaning of participation in the arts including orchestras. The study considered the changing audience demographics, technological trends, and participatory culture and concluded that these factors have contributed to the change that we now see in audience and support for cultural institutions, including orchestras (Wallace Foundation). Participatory engagement between a cultural institution and its audiences will recognize the audiences' expectations and result in a renewal of support for the institutions. Two main questions emerged:

- How can the arts field harness new technologies and media to communicate with and engage new audiences while maintaining artistic excellence? (Wallace Foundation, 4).
- How can arts organizations make better use of market research and other information to better understand, and tap into, major demographic shifts and changing audience preference? (Wallace Foundation, 4).

The Wallace foundation also found that 77 percent of the current orchestra supporters have had some form of formal musical training as players or singers (5).

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Methodology**

The researcher studied the social media practices of U.S. symphony orchestras. The researcher also explored how 19 to 35 year olds feel about symphony orchestras and attempted to ascertain which marketing practices and promotions are most successful in reaching this demographic. The researcher gathered data through in-depth interviews with potential concertgoers age 19 to 35. The researcher constructed an online survey using Survey Monkey. The universe for this portion of the study was communication professionals at U.S. symphony orchestras.

#### **Research Methods**

The hypotheses were tested using a quantitative Internet survey via Survey Monkey. When conducting a survey, the researcher must consider all advantages and disadvantages attached. A survey can be used to investigate problems in realistic settings. “Newspaper reading, television viewing, and consumer behavior patterns can be examined where they happen rather than in a laboratory or screening room under artificial conditions,” (Wimmer & Dominick, 185). Surveys are also relatively cost efficient considering the amount of information collected, and large amounts of data can be collected with relative ease from a variety of people. “The survey technique allows researchers to examine many variables (demographic and lifestyle information, attitudes, motives, intentions, and so on)...also, geographic boundaries do not limit most surveys,” (185). Additionally, data that are helpful to survey research already exists: “Data archives, government documents, census materials, radio and television rating

books, and voter registration lists can be used as primary sources or secondary sources of information,” (186).

Though surveys have many advantages, there are also disadvantages. Most importantly, independent variables cannot be influenced, and the researcher cannot prove that the relationship between independent and dependent variables are casual or non casual. “The survey may establish that A and B are related, but it is impossible to determine solely from the survey results that A causes B. Causality is difficult to establish because many intervening and extraneous variables are involved,” (186). Bias can also occur due to survey question design. “Inappropriate wording or placement of questions within a questionnaire can bias results,” (186). Finally, there is the potential problem of talking to the wrong people. Unfortunately, some respondents may lie about variables that are important to the results of the study (such as age) and some may even lack cooperation (186).

The survey for this study was distributed through E-mail to a random sample of approximately 220 U.S. symphony orchestras, taken from a compilation of lists from Wikipedia and the 2010 Musical America Directory provided by the Philadelphia Orchestra. A random sample gives each member of the universe- in this case, professional U.S. symphony orchestras- an equal chance at being selected for the survey. Using a random sample required the researcher to compile a list of the population, but detailed knowledge of the population was not required.

Data from this survey was collected during the month of June 2010. Survey questions were:

1. What is your estimated social media budget?
2. Do you have a written social media communication plan?
3. How much time per week is dedicated to social media activities?
4. What social media sites does your organization actively use?
5. How would you rank your organization's attitude toward social media?
6. What is your organization's overall knowledge of social media?
7. Do any of your subscriber engagement efforts target an age specific demographic?
8. Do any of your subscriber engagement efforts specifically target trained musicians?
9. Does your organization use social media to develop participative engagement events?

The survey contained a variety of questions including open-ended responses, close-ended and scaling questions. Some questions such as demographic inquiries can be measured with open- or close-ended questions, but the measurement of attitudes, feelings and thoughts require the use of scales (188).

Though there are many different types of scaling questions, Likert Scales, or “the summated rating approach,” were used in this survey (55). In a Likert Scale, topical statements are produced and respondents can strongly agree, agree, be neutral, disagree or strongly disagree (55). In this survey, the Likert Scale responses were ranked 1-7, 1 being “Hostile,” “Elementary,” and “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Enthusiastic,” “Expert,” and “Strongly Agree.”

In addition, qualitative research was conducted in the form of face-to-face interviews with seven, 19 to 35 year old respondents who identified themselves as potential concertgoers. The researcher used an informal (or nonrandom) method to select the sample. As with all research methods, personal interviews/ surveys have both advantages and disadvantages.

Face-to-Face interviews allow for more in-depth answers to the interviewer’s questions. The intimate setting elicits more detail and more honest answers to sensitive questions that may be unanswered in a survey (207). Additionally, interviews are flexible.

Questions are easy to ask, time can be extended and respondents can be called or interviewed face-to-face. Finally, the respondent has a harder time ending the survey than hanging up during a phone survey or throwing out a mail survey (208).

Though interviews have the potential to elicit useful information, they also have disadvantages. Interviews can be labor- and cost- intensive. Research can take several days or weeks to finish, and gathering data involves transcribing each interview (208). Though this interviewer compensated the interview respondents for this study with dinner, some research companies could charge up to \$1,000 per respondent. “If large number of interviewers are needed, it is usually necessary to employ field supervisors to coordinate their work...” (208). Unfortunately, face-to-face interviews may create interviewer bias and respondents may have a hard time answering truthfully due to interviewer’s age, sex, race, dress, behavior or comments.

Once willing participants were found in the southern New Jersey area, the researcher designed questions for the face-to-face interviews. Questions were not given to the respondents before hand so they were not able to prepare answers. These interviews took place in May and ended in June 2010. Survey questions were:

1. Are you between the ages of 19-35?
2. What is your occupation?
3. How much time per week do you dedicate to social media activities?
4. What social media sites do you actively use?
5. Do you follow any specific organizations on social media sites (i.e. Facebook Fan pages, Myspace Friend, Twitter Follower)?
6. When searching for information about an organization, musical group or other entertainment, are you more likely to look at their website or their social media pages? Why?
7. How often do you attend orchestral concerts?
8. How many times a year would you say you attend?
9. Why would you not attend an orchestra concert?

10. What would motivate you to attend an orchestra concert?
11. Do you follow any orchestral organizations on social media sites?
12. Do the organizations actively update their social media sites?
13. How often do they update their social media sites?
14. Would you be more likely to purchase tickets to an event or concert if the organization actively participated in a social media site that you actively use? Why or why not?
15. Would you be more likely to donate to an organization that actively participated in a social media site that you actively use? Why or why not?
16. Would you be more likely to subscribe to an organization that actively participated in a social media site that you actively use? Why or why not?
17. Have any organizations' participation in social media increased your visits to their websites?
18. Have you ever been involved in any participative engagement events offered through an orchestral organization's social media page?

### **Data Analysis**

The researcher transcribed data from the seven interviews and compared it in order to identify trends and recurrent habits among respondents. The researcher tabulated the online surveys for frequencies and percentages using tools supplied through SurveyMonkey.com.



## **Chapter Four**

### **Findings**

The researcher conducted the study using both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. First, the researcher distributed an online survey through email, and using Survey Monkey, to communication professionals at U.S. symphony orchestras. The sample number was n=220, selected randomly from the 2010 Musical America Directory. The second method was in-depth interviews with members of the 19 to 35 age group in the southern New Jersey area. Data results were as follows.

#### **Survey**

Fifty percent of survey respondents claim that their organization does not target a specific demographic group. However, this indicates that the remaining 50 percent does target a specific age group. Data revealed that 21.9% of respondents target the younger demographic and 18.8 percent target the older demographic. Finally, 9.4 percent target the ages 36 to 45. Of those 21.9 percent that admit to targeting the younger demographic, 85.5 percent use social media while doing so. Figure 1 represents how many organizations admit to using social media and who they do or do not target.

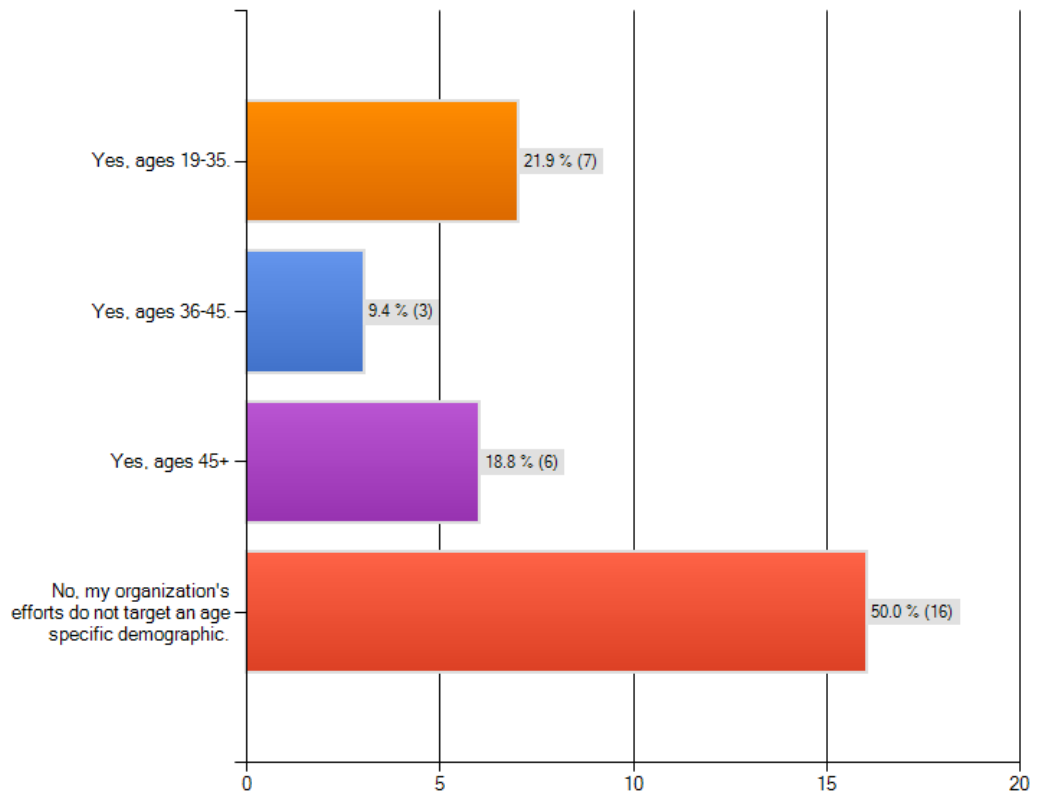


Figure 1. Survey Question: Do any of your subscriber engagement efforts target an age specific demographic? (Organizations that admit to using social media and their target demographic).

The majority of survey respondents, 75.8 percent, positively use social media to target the 19-35 age group, and younger demographics, as shown in Figure 2.

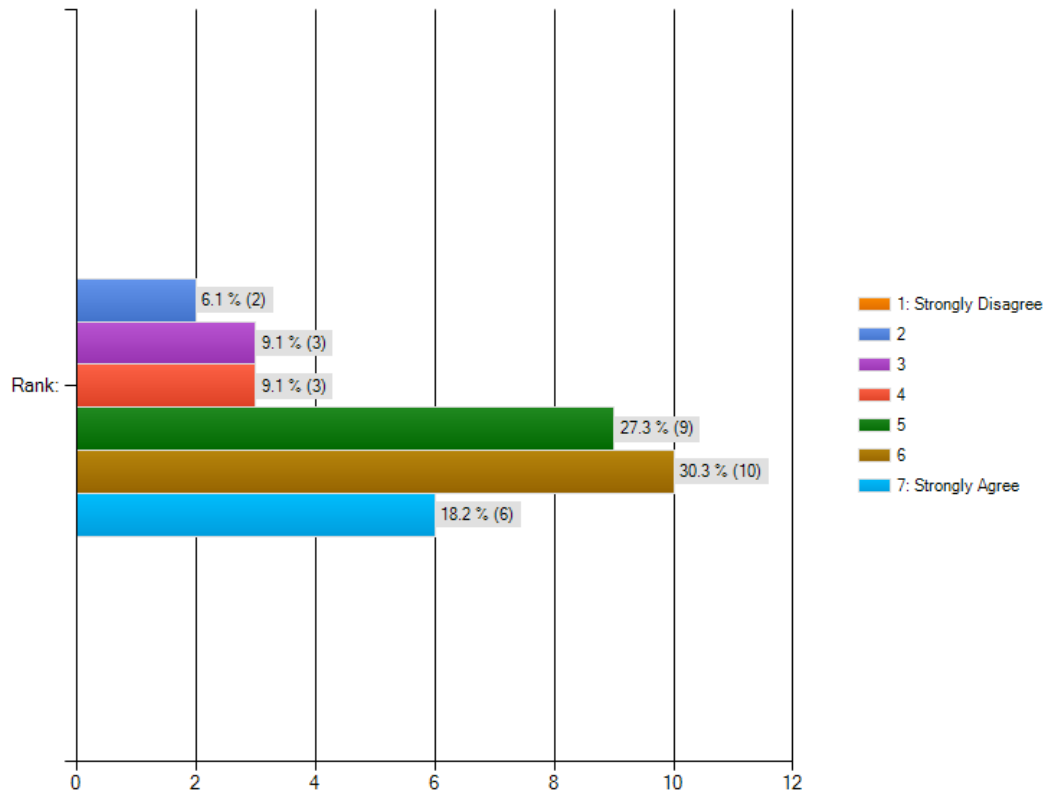


Figure 2. Survey question: My organization uses social media to increase awareness of the orchestra’s performances and special events among a younger demographic(ages 19-35).

When the researcher asked for additional comments on social media from communication professionals at U.S. symphony orchestras, one respondent said, “Facebook and Twitter are usually in the top 10 for referrals to our site.” Another respondent stated he “increased the number of people who receive our e-mail blasts because of Facebook. Facebook sends people to our website where they can choose to be

on our mailing list or not. It ENGAGES people.”

As stated before, the research that 50 percent of respondents do not target a certain demographic. Table 1 indicates that 17 of the respondents (53.1 percent) have not seen an increase in ticket sales since using social media.

*Table 1. Ticket sale increases related to use of social media.*

My organization's concert ticket sales have increased thanks in part to our participation in social media.									
Answer Options	1: Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7: Strongly Agree	Rating Average	Response Count
Rank:	1	10	6	8	3	1	3	3.53	32
								answered question	32
								skipped question	1

Table 2 indicates that more than three quarters of respondents (75.8 percent) have not seen an increase in their fundraising since using social media.

*Table 2. Effect of using social media on fund raising.*

Social media has effectively increased fund raising for my organization.									
Answer Options	1: Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7: Strongly Agree	Rating Average	Response Count
Rank:	3	16	3	6	0	1	0	2.55	29
								answered question	29
								skipped question	4

## **General Findings from Survey**

The most popular social media tool was Facebook with 100 percent of respondents actively using it with either a fan page or profile. The next most popular tool was YouTube with 68.8 percent; Twitter with 62.5 percent; a blog with 43.8 percent; and Podcasts, MySpace and Flickr all with 15.6 percent. When asked if they used any other social media tools or sites, three respondents said they used Instant Encore. Also mentioned was LinkedIn, Foursquare, Yelp, message boards and E-mail blasts. One respondent said, "I think it's a very useful tool and we would benefit greatly by using it more. Right now I am focused on building a base of fans by posting interesting information and (often) up-to-the-minute postings. From there I'd like to start getting fans to take action." Only one respondent failed to answer this question.

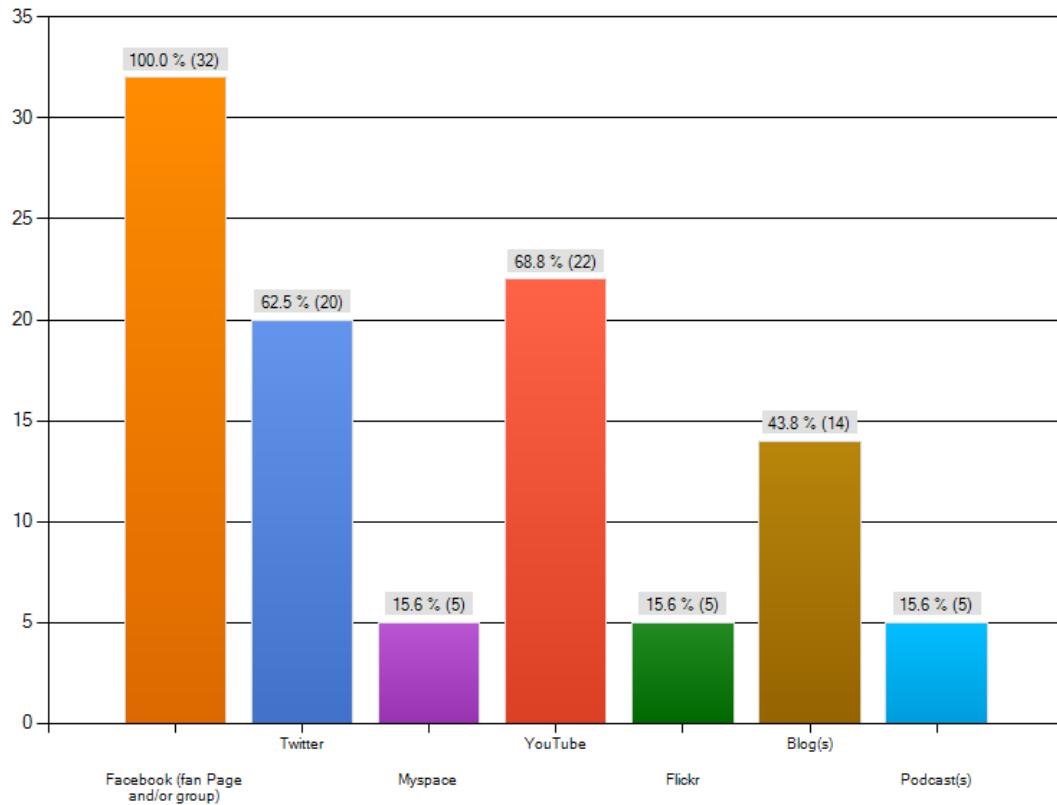


Figure 3. Survey Question: What social media sites does your organization actively use? (please check all that apply).

All survey respondents said someone at their organization spent at least part of their week on social media. As shown in Figure 4, 45.5 percent of respondents spend between one and five hours per week on social media; 24.2 percent spend between five and 10 hours per week; 18.2 percent spend less than hour on social media per week; and zero respondents spend between 20-30 hours. Three respondents spend between 10 and 20 hours, while only one respondent has a full-time employee on board, spending approximately 40 hours per week on social media.

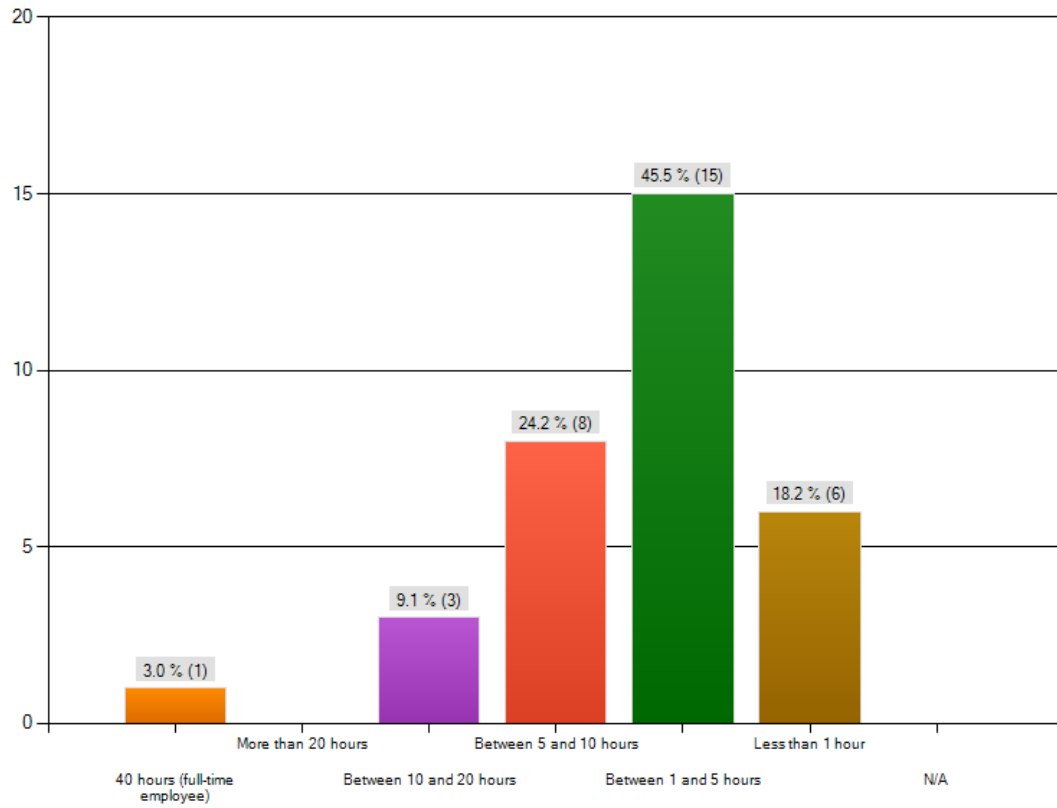


Figure 4. Survey question: How much time per week is devoted to social media activities?

The researcher also asked about respondents' social media budget. As shown in Figure 5, 42.4 percent of respondents do not have a budget for social media.

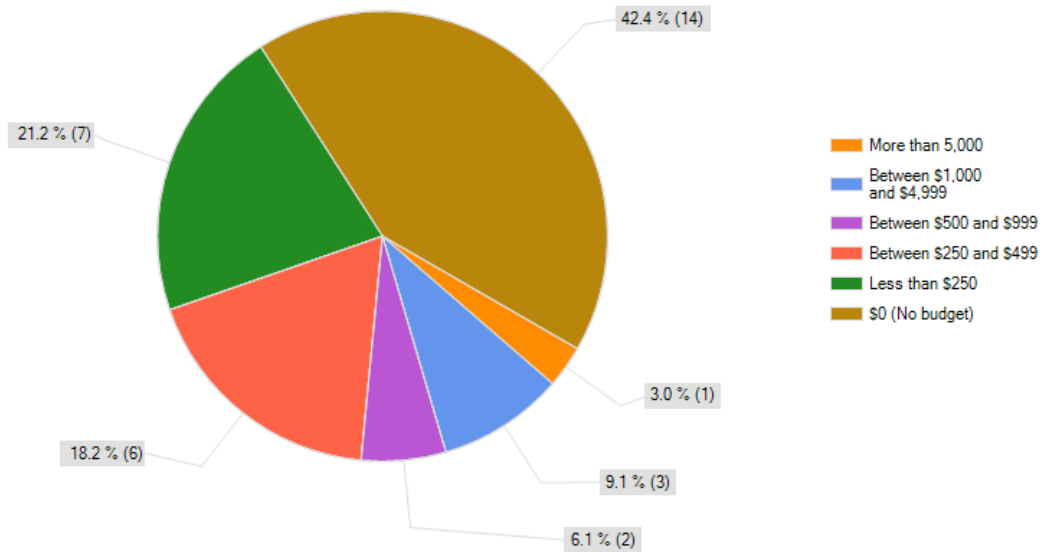


Figure 5. Survey Question: What is your estimated social media budget?

One respondent said, “With such a limited amount of funding and, in turn, small staffs, there often is not time to keep up with the constant updates of social media. We have a Facebook page but it is a very low priority in comparison to everyday operations and production of the orchestra. I believe that social media is incredibly effective when used in the correct way but establishing an individual and funding to spend the time/effort into the upkeep of it is difficult, especially in the economy for a nonprofit.” Another was enthusiastic about social media saying, “We at the Philharmonic are very enthusiastic about social media. At the moment we do not have the resources to fully utilize social



media. We hope that in the coming season we can create a larger presence in the social media world.”

One respondent in a seemingly unique situation, stated, “We are unique in that we received a grant to fund a full-time position for media related initiatives. Without this recent grant - my answers would be very different.”

Data showed that 74.2 percent of respondents said they do not have a written social media plan, as shown in Figure 6.

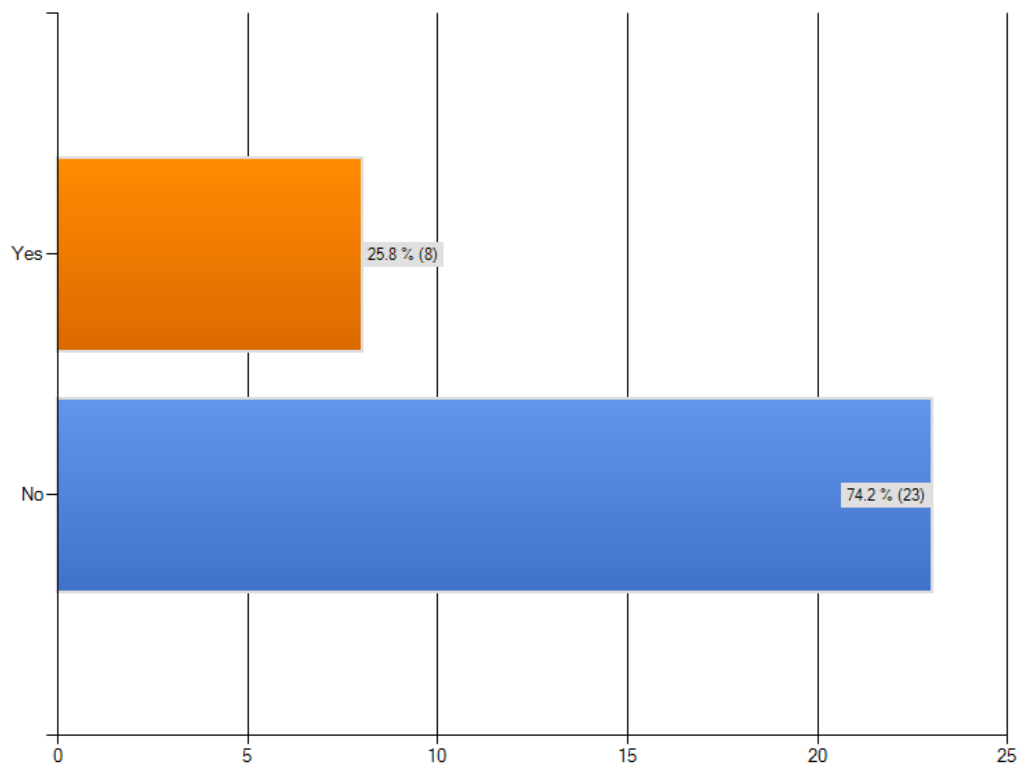


Figure 6. Survey Question: Do you have a written social media communications plan?

When asked for their open-ended thoughts on social media, several respondents commented on their lack of a written social media plan. Some respondents are in the early stages of using social media. One states, “We are new users to a lot of social media, but will be putting together formal written policies soon.” Another said that, “I anticipate it [social media] garnering much more attention (time & written plan) and budget in the coming season.” Another said, “We have no hard data about the impact of social media on either ticket sales or fundraising, or in web traffic, although we hope that there is a positive impact.” Finally, one respondent said, “We are relatively new at this.” Another respondent said, “We're just getting our feet wet.”

In addition to just getting started, other respondents do not see a need for a structured plan. One respondent said the following about social media, “Social media in a haphazard, random way, based primarily on the idea that we ‘should’ do it just because everybody else is. We would certainly welcome any concrete evidence (even anecdotal) that it can be successful, and how it can be efficiently used.” One respondent said that, “plans are not the end all and be all. Plans lack spontaneity.”

## **Interviews**

Five of the seven interview respondents stated that they would be more likely to look at an orchestra’s social media page if the organization’s link appeared on their News Feed or friend’s social media account page.

- Respondent “A,” a medical student with limited time, spends about five hours a week looking at and participating on social media sites. The respondent reported that social media is the, “main way to find information...so if I saw it on social media I would be

interested. Any of my ticket purchases definitely result from what my friends are doing and information I find on Facebook.”

- Respondent “B” uses social media to find information about bands, comedians, orchestras and other fine art organizations rather than checking the business website: “Social Media is usually more up to date than the website.”
- Respondent “C” spends approximately seven hours per week on social media web sites. When searching for information, the respondent prefers an organization or business’ social media pages over a website or newsletter: “Social Media is more of a snapshot for generic information ...social media has a cleaner layout, is easy to navigate, has quick and to-the-point information. Information is easier to find on social media.” The Respondent also stated that when an organization actively participates in a social media site that she actively uses, she is both more likely to purchase tickets to events and even donate funds. “[Because of social media] I’d be more aware of them and their needs; if they sounded interesting to me and showcased what they did in an interesting way I’d be more inclined to go and more apt to donate some of my paycheck.”
- Respondent “D” spends approximately five hours per week on social media sites. If an organization actively participates in a social media site that she actively uses, she is more likely to purchase tickets to events especially if the organization is showcasing deals and fun night out: “ I’d be more aware ... if they were active [in my network] I might, anything for a deal and a night out!”
- Respondent “E” spends approximately five hours per week on social media sites. The

respondent is an avid orchestra follower and fan. Social media has aided the respondent in keeping up with orchestras. The respondent would be more likely to buy tickets from an active participant in his social network.

- Respondent “F” spends approximately 12 hours per week on social media sites. Though respondent does not often attend orchestra concerts, social media has the potential to spark his interest. “I wouldn’t get that info any other way; if I were exposed to their programming more I’d have a higher chance of buying tickets because I’d be more interested. Social media is all about exposure and getting people’s attention.”
  - Fifty percent of interview respondents were avid orchestra followers and already involved with their local symphony orchestras. Respondents that did not follow any orchestra admitted that social media had the potential to get their attention.
- Respondent “C” stated that when an organization actively participates in a social media site that she actively uses, she is both more likely to purchase tickets to events and even donate funds. “[Because of social media] I’d be more aware of them and their needs; if they sounded interesting to me and showcased what they did in an interesting way I’d be more inclined to go and more apt to donate some of my paycheck.”
- Respondent “D” is more likely to purchase tickets to events especially if the organization is showcasing deals and fun night out: “I’d be more aware ... if they were active [in my network] I might, anything for a deal and a night out!”
- Respondent “F” stated that social media has the potential to spark his interest. “I wouldn’t get that info any other way; if I were exposed to their programming more I’d

have a higher chance of buying tickets because I'd more interested. Social media is all about exposure and getting people's attention."

### **General Findings in In-depth Interviews**

All respondents stated in some form that social media was the best way to reach a younger demographic group. Two of the six respondents actively follow orchestras and regularly (at least once a month) attend orchestra concerts. Two other respondents do not attend concerts as frequently but occasionally (at least once per year), and admit that attending concerts and events and following orchestras on social media sites would be more likely to come out of friend referrals and word-of-mouth. The last two respondents who do not attend orchestra concerts or events nor follow them online have no interest in classical music but say the best way to get their attention would be through their social media networks.

## Chapter 5

### Summary, Conclusions & Recommendations

The researcher concluded the following from the data from the Internet survey and personal interviews. The researcher also provides recommendations and advice for further research on applying the power of social media to generate awareness and support for symphony orchestras among younger target markets.

**H1: The majority of marketing activities employed by symphony orchestras are directed toward older demographic groups.**

Hypothesis 1 was not supported by the data. After distributing an online survey to 220 U.S. orchestra communication professionals, the researcher found that although 50 percent of survey respondents do target a specific demographic, only 18.8 percent target an older demographic. Answers among most survey respondents varied when asked who their subscriber efforts targeted.

The researcher believes that due to the current economic climate, it is unrealistic for any organization to target only one age group. The researcher suggests that symphony orchestras create a strategic plan that markets to and engages each demographic group. This allows the organization to avoid targeting one age group either intentionally or as a consequence of neglect of other age groups.

H2: Younger demographic groups tend to be persuaded more by information that appears on social media and through word-of-mouth rather than traditional media.

Hypothesis 2 was supported by the data. Based on data collected from in-depth interviews conducted with members of the 19 to 35 age cohort, the researcher found that all respondents agreed that active members of their social media network have greater chances at catching their attention than organizations who do not participate in social media. Respondents who are not involved with any symphony orchestras appear to believe that social media would be the way to attract this target market to the orchestra's programs.

Based on research from the Internet survey, some respondents stated that social media provided the most referrals to their website. One respondent stated that social media engages people and therefore attracts more attention for the organization.

The researcher concluded that social media must be a part of any strategic plan that targets a younger demographic as this is a primary medium for this group to engage with organizations.

**H3: The majority of communication managers working for symphony orchestras find it difficult to generate support among younger demographic groups.**

Hypothesis 3 was not supported by the data. Research from the online survey of U.S. symphony orchestras indicated that targeting a younger demographic is neither a goal nor a priority for survey respondents.

The data indicates that respondents who target younger demographic groups use social media as part of their marketing communication efforts. However, respondents reported that the use of social media has yet to yield a significant increase in ticket sales or fundraising efforts with the target market.

Symphony orchestras do not find it difficult to reach a younger demographic because they do not make the effort to do so. The researcher recommends taking the time to create a strategic social media communication addition to their current marketing efforts in order to reach not only the 19 to 35 age group but to a broader audience overall. Because 74 percent of the survey respondents said that they do not have a written social media plan, and 64 percent spends less than five hours per week managing social media, the researcher suggests more effort may be needed.

**H4: The majority of members of younger demographic groups are receptive to supporting symphony orchestras.**

The researcher was unable to draw conclusions for H4 because the data failed to yield significant results. Respondents unanimously agreed that the most effective way to reach a younger demographic group was via social media. However, only 50 percent indicated a potential interest in attending and supporting orchestral events. The remainder said that they had no interest in the orchestra, no matter how involved they were in social media.

**General Findings**

Not surprisingly, the most popular social media tool was Facebook with 100 percent of respondents actively using the site with either a fan page or profile. Although all survey respondents said someone at their organization spends at least part of their week on social media, most respondents said they had no strategic or written social media plan, and 42.4 percent of respondents do not have a budget for social media. Though funds were the main if not only reason for a lack of plan, the researcher believes that a strategically written social media plan will prove to be an efficient and economical tool for



orchestras.

While interviewing members of the younger demographic, the researcher learned that those who attend orchestra concerts more than once per year are trained musicians with a broad knowledge of music. The attendees all stated that if budgets allowed they would subscribe to season tickets as well. The researcher believes that targeting this specific group— trained musicians— through social media with participative engagement tactics such as free concerts for music students or a reception to meet the musicians would increase participation.

When reaching out to the 19 to 35 age group, symphony orchestra communication professionals should understand they are in competition with other cultural organizations and therefore must plan a competitive strategy.

When attracting a younger demographic who are exposed to a wide range of music through various media, the researcher suggests orchestras take advantage of social media's expansive reach to foster engagement and participation. The goal of the orchestra should be to consistently attract an audience through successful media engagement, even to those members of the demographic who may not have an initial interest in their organization. When targeting the younger demographic, the researcher recommends accomplishing this through social media as a primary strategy.

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## Appendix A

### Social Media and Symphony Orchestras Survey questions

1. Name of orchestra
2. Your professional title
3. Your e-mail address
4. What is your estimated social media budget?
  - a. More than 5,000
  - b. Between \$1,000 and \$4,999
  - c. Between \$500 and \$999
  - d. Between \$250 and \$499
  - e. Less than \$250
  - f. (No budget)
5. Do you have a written social media communication plan?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
6. How much time per week is dedicated to social media activities?
  - a. 40 hours (full-time employee)
  - b. More than 20 hours
  - c. Between 10 and 20 hours
  - d. Between 5 and 10 hours Between 1 and 5 hours
  - e. Less than 1 hour
  - f. N/A
7. What social media sites does your organization actively use? (Please check all that apply).
  - a. Facebook (fan Page and/or group)
  - b. Twitter
  - c. Myspace
  - d. YouTube
  - e. Flickr Blog(s)
  - f. Podcast(s)
  - g. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

8. How would you rank your organization's attitude toward social media?

1: Hostile 2 3 4 5 6 7: Enthusiastic

9. What is your organization's overall knowledge of social media?

1: Elementary 2 3 4 5 6 7: Expert

Please rank the the following statements.

10. Social media is an effective attribute to my organization's communication plan.

1: Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 6 7: Strongly Agree

11. Social media effectively increases my organization's brand awareness.

1: Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 6 7: Strongly Agree

12. Social media is effective in increasing awareness of my organization's programming.

1: Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 6 7: Strongly Agree

13. Social media effectively maintains my organization's online presence.

1: Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 6 7: Strongly Agree

14. My organization's concert ticket sales have increased thanks in part to our participation in social media.

1: Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 6 7: Strongly Agree

15. Social media has effectively increased fund raising for my organization.

1: Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 6 7: Strongly Agree

16. Social media is effective in increasing Search Engine Optimization (SEO).

1: Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 6 7: Strongly Agree

17. Social media is effective in increasing my organization's Web site traffic.

1: Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 6 7: Strongly Agree

18. My organization uses social media to increase awareness of the orchestra's performances and special events among a younger demographic (ages 19-35).

1: Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 6 7: Strongly Agree

19. Do your any of your subscriber engagement efforts target an age specific demographic?

- a. Yes, ages 19-35.
- b. Yes, ages 36-45.
- c. Yes, ages 45+
- d. No, my organization's efforts do not target an age specific demographic.

20. Do any of your subscriber engagement efforts specifically target trained musicians?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Unknown

21. Does your organization use social media to develop participative engagement events?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Unknown

22. In the space provided please share any additional thoughts on social media.

23. Would you like a copy of the results of this survey sent to your E-mail address?

- a. Yes
- b. No

## Appendix B

### 19-35 Cohort Survey

- 1.Name
- 2.Are you between the ages of 19-35?
- 3.Occupation:
- 4.Sex:
- 5.How much time per week do you dedicate to social media activities?
- 6.What social media sites do you actively use?
- 7.Do you follow any specific organizations on social media sites (i.e. Facebook Fan pages, Myspace Friend, Twitter Follower)?
- 8.When searching for information about an organization, musical group or other entertainment, are you more likely to look at their website or their social media pages?  
Why?
- 9.How often do you attend orchestral concerts?
- 10.How many times a year would you say you attend?
- 11.Why would you not attend an orchestra concert?
- 12.What would motivate you to attend an orchestra concert?
- 13.Do you follow any orchestral organizations on social media sites? If yes, which ones?
- 14.Do the organizations actively update their social media sites?
- 15.How often do they update their social media sites?
- 16.Would you be more likely to purchase tickets to an event or concert if the organization actively participated in a social media site that you actively use? Why or Why not?
- 17.Would you be more likely to donate to an organization that actively participated in a



social media site that you actively use? Why or Why not?

18. Have any organizations' participation in social media increased your visits to their web sites?

19. Have you ever been involved in any participative engagement events offered through an orchestral organization's social media page?

20. Have you been trained as a musician or singer?

21. If you have been trained as a musician or singer, do you feel this influences your feelings about supporting an orchestra. If so how?

22. Please share any additional thoughts on social media.